Narratives of Black women academics

in South African higher education

An autoethnography

by

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DECLARATION

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third-party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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ABSTRACT

This is an autoethnography of a Black woman who tracks her educational trajectory through and beyond Apartheid South Africa. In addition to the formal educational journey, the inseparable cultural education is included. For comparison, she employs the stories of other Black women in similar academic positions and institutions in South Africa, to depict an inclusive, yet often exclusive, reality of being a Black (Black, mixed, Indian) woman academic in South Africa. Deconstructing the academic experiences in these spaces aims at "unsettling [white occupation] the grip over mundane as well as high stakes decisions" (Arday & Mirza, 2018). In South Africa, more Black women acquire undergraduate degrees than any other group, yet they remain underrepresented in the acquisition of postgraduate degrees, senior academic and top management positions. Currently working in academia in South Africa, the author aims to understand the development of sense of identity and show how this influences the interplay, and thus the progression, of the individual within the higher education context. Previous studies investigating Black women academics' positions and perspectives of social, cultural, and educational experiences are relevant. However, this thesis addresses the role of experiences and perceptions as vital influencing factors in the interplay between individual and institution. This thesis takes on a role adding to the "polyphony" of voices and perspectives from Black academics. It aims to contribute to "loosening the grip of positivism on theory and practice in the human sciences" (Lather, 2017). As theorists, we do not automatically reflect deeply on the political influences on our professional lives. Reflection is, however, key, not only to connecting past and present, but in improving future experiences for ourselves and others. The act of re-collecting past experiences can be cathartic and educational. It allows us to "weave" and connect the dots between who and where we were as opposed to the world we aspire to (Lather, 2007). The purpose of this "weave" is to identify and examine patterns, to make sense of and improve the world we inhabit. Framed theoretically within critical and intersectional feminism (Crenshaw, 1989; hooks, 1994), this study is grounded in experiential storytelling. Stories which are seldom taught as History address issues which are often rather avoided. Using a unique methodology, the collected data is assigned thematically for analysis and to show that the centrality to understanding why Black women remain on the lower rungs of academia, is the interplay between individual and context. The results of this study signify problematic avoidance and silences around the need of a caring environment for all academics, but especially for Black women. It shows that due to historical, societal, and cultural silencing of Black women, there is a need to centre their voices and develop a vocabulary for Black women in academia to describe their experiences. Cultural capital, or lack thereof, influences a sense of belonging and inflicts other "micro-aggressions" upon the Black woman academic (Sue, 2015; Henkeman, 2016). Relevant transformational features cannot adequately be addressed, much less

achieved, if the spaces to navigate these discussions are not radically owned equally by all but also accepting that it is time for the amplified voices of Black woman.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie outo-etnografie volg die opvoedkundige roete van ’n swart Suid-Afrikaanse vrou se skool- en tersiêre opleiding gedurende Apartheid en daarna. Saam met die formele opvoedkundige reis, word die onafskeidbare kulturele reis ingesluit. Ter vergelyking wend sy haar tot stories van ander swart vroue akademici aan universiteite in soortgelyke akademiese posisies in Suid-Afrika. Hierdie stories skets ’n inklusiewe, dog ook dikwels eksklusiewe, realiteit van ’n swart (Swart, gemeng, Indiër) vroulike akademikus in Suid-Afrika. Die dekonstruksie van akademiese ervarings in hierdie omgewings se doel is om “[wit besetting] se greep op alledaagse, sowel as hoë-risiko, besluite te verontrus” (Arday & Mirza, 2018b). In Suid-Afrika verwerf meer swart vroue voorgraadse kwalifikasies as enige ander groep. Tog bly hulle onderverteenwoordig in die verwerwing van nagraadse kwalifikasies, senior-akademiese en topbestuursposisies. Die outeur, wat tans in Suid-Afrikaanse akademia werksaam is, poog om die ontwikkeling van ’n identiteitsin te begryp. Die outeur beoog ook om te wys hoe hierdie identiteitsvorming die wisselwerking, en dus die progressie, tussen die individu en die hoër-onderwys konteks beïnvloed. Vorige studies wat swart vroue-akademici se akademiese posisies en perspektiewe rondom sosiale, kulturele en opvoedkundige ervarings bestudeer, is van toepassing. Hierdie tesis spreek egter die rol van ervarings en perspektiewe aan as wesenlike faktore wat die wisselwerking tussen die individu en die instituut beïnvloed. Hierdie tesis dra by tot die “polifonie” van stemme en perspektiewe vanaf swart akademici. Die doel is om by te dra tot die “losmaak van die greep wat positivisme het op teorie en praktyk in die menswetenskappe” (Lather, 2017). As teoretici reflekteer ons nie outomaties in diepte op die politieke invloed op ons professionele lewens nie. Refleksie is egter van uiterste belang, nie net om die verlede en hede bymekaar te bring nie, maar om ook toekomstige ervarings vir onself en ander te verbeter. Die doelbewuste herinnering aan (of her-versameling van) vorige ervarings kan katarties en leersaam wees. Dit maak dit vir ons moontlik om verskeie drade van ons menswees saam te “weef” en verbande te trek tussen wie en waar ons was in teenstelling met die wêreld waarna ons streef (Lather, 2007). Die doel van hierdie “weefdrade” is om patrone te identifiseer en te ondersoek sodat ons sin kan maak van die wêreld en om hierdie wêreld waarin ons leef te verbeter. Die teoretiese raamwerk vir hierdie studie is kritiese en interseksionele feminisme (Crenshaw, 1989; hooks, 1994) en is gegrondves op die oordra van stories uit eie ervaring. Stories, wat selde as Geskiedenis onderrig word, spreek kwessies aan wat gewoonlik vermy word. ’n Unieke metodologie is gebruik (en die versamelde data tematies verdeel vir analise) om uit te lig en te begryp dat dit die wisselwerking tussen die individu en die instituut is wat sentraal staan in die redes waarom swart vroue op die laer range van akademia bly. Wat uitstaan in die resultate van hierdie studie, is die problematiese vermyding van en stiltes rondom die behoefte aan ’n sorgsame omgewing vir alle akademici, veral vir swart vroue. Die studie toon dat, as gevolg van die onderdrukte stem van swart vroue op historiese, sosiale en kulturele vlak, is daar ’n behoefte aan ’n woordeskat om ervarings van en deur swart vroue in akademia te beskryf. Kulturele kapitaal, oftewel die gebrek daaraan, beïnvloed swart vroue se gevoel van aanvaarding en stel swart vroue in akademia bloot aan “mikro-aggressies” (Sue, 2015; Henkeman, 2016). Relevante, transformerende aspekte kan nie genoegsaam aangespreek word, en nog minder bereik word, as die omgewings waarin hierdie gesprekke gevoer word, nie radikaal en op gelyke vlak vir almal plaasvind nie. Daar moet ook aanvaar word dat dit hoog tyd is vir die amplifikasie van swart vroue se stemme.

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Although I have always had too many questions for blind beliefs, the Universe has been kind. I have a hoard of angels to light my way as I continue to rage against suffering under dominance.

My mother, Una Lee (Petersen/Marinus): Your love of reading, independent spirit and putting my education first were my first steps on this journey. You supplied the tools so I could cut my cloth as I chose.

My sister, Gail Lee: I still believe that the noise of cicadas at night is the sound of the stars twinkling, just as you taught me. You fed my fantasies in a world that was cruel and you made me believe in good even when I stole your pencils.

My cousins: awful, awesome, first, best, everlasting friends. You are my tribe of Black-eyed, frizzy-haired brunettes and blue-eyed blondes. Snot and tears of joy or sadness, we are ever connected.

My teachers: who showed us how to build from apartheid gutters, to dismantle without destroying.

My friends, colleagues, and students, Black and white: we are all surviving that evil system - past but ever-present. We are never going to be a nation unless there's a willingness to be discomforted.

My first doctoral supervisor, the late Professor Brenda Leibowitz: you saw the girl from Hanover Park who wanted to be an academic. I miss you in so many places we used to get lost together and I still feel your presence.

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My Sun and my Moon, Joshua and Elena: you before anything. I am immensely proud of you both not only for *what* you stand, but that even in fear, *you stand*. I am proud that you are both *givers.* I hope that you and your company will always know to trust your gut and never show indifference in the face of injustice.

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Part One – The Shifting Sands of the Cape Flats 1966 to 2006

Every experience is an educational one. The monster had harboured itself under the bed for all of my childhood years. The monster came in many forms, over the years, as it tried to rob me of my life force. It would cause me to draw myself into a ball in the centre of the bed I shared with my sister. This monster that caused me to black out when it became too real. The monster was that and this uncle or mister. It was where I lived. It was the lack of state-care when I was sick; food when I was hungry; and money when I wanted to get to class. My best childhood and teenage memories are of reading with my sister after a visit to the library, being at school and sitting in the university library as an undergraduate student. Many events caused me tears, but school, with all its own demons, gave me hope. I will try to relay just how much and little my education afforded me a place in the world, an identity and a sense of belonging.

This Is My Story (in part)…

I am of varied race ("coloured" is not a term I want to use). In a country of many different people, I have a bit of everyone – Black, Chinese, Indian, Muslim, Portuguese and Irish. I will further refer to Black as inclusive of all but white people. As far as I know, my maternal half Mozambican/Portuguese grandfather had been washed ashore by a capsized slave ship in the mid-1800s while the hundreds of Black slaves tied to the bottom of the ship perished. He and his brothers, being mixed race and tanned skin with blue eyes, were slave-owners' servants rather than enslaved. Later, he married an Irish woman and my grandmother was born of this union. My grandmother, as her siblings, could pass as white. She married a mixed-race (Zulu/White) man, Daniel Petersen. They raised nine children. My mother and four of her sisters born before 1950 were registered on their identity documents as "mixed other" while their younger siblings born after 1950 were registered as "Cape coloured". Five of the nine children would have been able to pass as white[1]*. This caused much pain*

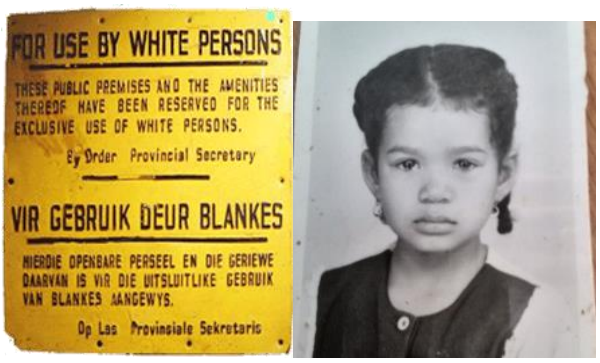
[1] During Apartheid people classified as "coloured" and could be considered as "passing as white", i.e., fair in complexion and straight hair. The reason that many "coloured" people did this is because the system of classification in South Africa afforded privileges according to "race". Many classified as "coloured" but who could pass as white, formally had themselves reclassified to obtain privileges as white citizens. This meant that they had to sever all ties with their family who did not "pass as white".

which was further passed down within my family where the fairer grandchildren were favoured by my great aunts and uncles who themselves bore the features of their white parentage. Later of my older second cousins applied to pass as white, were successful and voluntarily became estranged from the rest of us. My paternal grandparents' were descendants from St Helena; of Malaysian and Chinese descent and bore the surname Lee. I inherited from them my heavy-lidded Black eyes and thick dark, wavy hair. When we were younger, other children called my sister and me "children of the docks". This implied that, because of our slanted eyes, olive skin-tone and surname we had to be the product of a Chinese seaman and a Cape sex-worker.

My mother went to school until she was sixteen and then worked as a factory-hand (runner or gofer). However, her true talent was in the mathematical skill of detailed garment sketching, creating patterns and then size grading. Without a qualification, however, she went unrecognised as the brain behind successes of well-known designers. She became a sought-after patent-pattern maker in the garment industry, where white designers and white pattern makers passed her work off as their own. There were limits to what an unqualified and mixed-race woman could earn. She substituted her income by taking private jobs making wedding dresses – often sitting up all night beading elaborate wedding dresses, including for some of the designers for whom she worked!

At the age of 24, with two babies, and completely against the grain, my mother left her marriage. She had already learned to drive, bought a car, attended night school, and eventually bought a house. Only about 10% of Black families in South Africa own homes. For a long time it had been illegal. My and my sister's education was my mother's foremost priority, and I was the first from the two sides of large extended families to attend university.

My story fits perfectly within the frame of Apartheid Black child and single-parenthood. Only the outcome is not what the apartheid government intended. I track the events of our country's divided past and my own survival of an unfair educational system. Apartheid became legalised the year I was born, 1966. It ruled on my education, social interactions, and my most important decisions. It ended in 1994, the year I turned 28. The scorn with which Black people are still treated is often visible but ignored, sometimes invisible but always painful. The hardest overt thing yet to overcome is that, as Black people, we are at best semi-educated in broken communities. In addition, there were so many underhanded Apartheid operations, such as secretive breaches in medicinal vaccinations: administered in schools to all white children, to some mixed children but mostly excluding Black children.



Left: Legal signs in South Africa reminded us of where we did not belong except if we were servants
Right: My passport photo, aged 6 years



Left: Me (left in brown jersey) five years old with my sister and cousins in Athlone.
Centre: The one-bedroomed attached house in Hanover Park where I lived with my mother and sister until I was 21.
Right: Me, aged 7, Sub B (Grade 2) in our back yard on the Cape Flats, ready for the 2 kilometre walk to school.

Cape Town, the beautiful Mother City, hides a deeply damaged society, a vicious circle of impoverishment and hopelessness in the gang-ridden Black communities to the affluent white suburbs. I grew up in what is one of the most violent townships in the world. The Cape Flats, where many families were "rehoused" into cramped asbestos and cement houses from the mountain-view, sea-breezed, fertile soiled and leafy areas taken for whites. We were displaced to the sinking, shifting, sandy plains where nothing good would grow. Our home areas in District Six, Rondebosch and Tokai were demarcated for whites only and later worth millions while we received almost no compensation for our land. The Cape Flats became fertile only for breeding unimaginable social ills, where survival and crime, not education, would be the priority.

My Cape Flats is a broken place where our adolescent men join gangs, have children with young girls, commit horrendous crimes and then jailed for many years. The summers I remember were hot, dry and windy, and in winter the sandy plains became soggy, cold and unpredictable. A fine gritty, grey sand would sit in every corner of every tiny house. There were no shady trees or grass as the sun beat down its frustration on the asbestos rooftops. The sand cooked under the shoeless feet of

little children. In winter, the rains turned the sand into quicksand like thick porridge, teasing the empty stomachs. It was an uncompromising landscape where flowers and grass refused to grow.

Children were conceived in one-bedroomed houses in the short stints between jail terms and then left behind with frustrated women. For me, life in Hanover Park meant being friends with a child whose father was found dead in a park on a Sunday morning two short weeks after being released from a ten-year prison-sentence. My mother worked full-time and left for work before I went to school and got home late at night. Our neighbours', who looked after me as a child, son and son-in-law were murderers. Crime was inescapable. The scene was set for me to be sexually abused for five consecutive years throughout primary school and on and off during my high school years.

Hanover Park was also the place where Muslims and Christians were neighbours, brothers, sisters and cousins. We celebrated Labarang (Eid) and ate large pasteie (pies), Breyani and fancies (small, decorated cakes). Then on Christmas, Muslim friends would eat trifle which was especially made without alcohol to share with them (Muslims do not consume alcohol). It was where the beautiful Haroun and I fell in love but luckily never got to spend much time alone together. His family sold fruit and greens for a living. My mother learned to make roti and curry from Mrs Moena Abrahams over the low corrugated metal fence between backdoors of our attached houses. In the evening, we would run across the road to help Aunty Grace build her newest 5,000,000-piece puzzle of Buckingham Palace or Tulips in Amsterdam that covered her tiny lounge floor.

I could never judge those of my peers who became teen moms with gangster boyfriends and remain there today. The government had made it easier to stay and almost impossible to escape. It is through this narrative reflection that I realised all the evens, against the odds, which favoured me. There were girls who were prettier but less groomed, more clever but less stimulated, eager but had no-one to accompany her to the library, eloquent but not able to grab a teacher's interest with her English essays, promising but with a less savvy mother, interested in learning but with less motivation from the adults around her (Farmer, 2009).

The impact of these events on my educational trajectory is indeterminable but certain. Countless young children suffer similar fates and do not survive as I have. When I was seven years old my teacher told me that I was too stupid to be in sub B (Grade 2) because I had not been able to add 7+4. She sent me back to sub A (Grade 1). I spent that day in the toilet because I was new to the school and did not know where the Grade 1 classes were. I had started to worry about how I was going to tell my mother that I had been demoted. The next day I went back to the Grade 2 line and

the teacher did not seem to remember what she had done. I ignored the kids asking me what I was doing in their line. I have not forgotten the feeling over forty years later.

In high school, I preferred to spend my afternoons at school, either learning or reading. This was not only because I loved learning but because school felt better than my home community did. School became my refuge and I never missed a lesson. By the time I was sixteen I had developed life-long habits of reading and attending classes. Throughout my pre-teen years, I had been "punished" for being working-class, mixed-race and a girl or woman. There were, however, times that I recall resisting. I started to exercise my power in favour of myself at times, while at other times I did not. About two years into being sexually abused, when I was eight or nine, I took courage and told the perpetrator that I would tell on him to my father or uncles. He threatened to kill my mother and told me that my father did not care. My resistance may have meant nothing to him, but I had used my voice.

I did not realise that despite religiously doing my schoolwork, I was receiving sub-standard education compared to white children. Black children of solely African heritage received even worse. All this was an attempt to hold "non-white" people back. By the time I turned sixteen none of my peers where we lived were no longer attending school. They stayed home doing nothing or taking care of babies, went to work in factories or as maids. I was not completely immune to the lures in the community. I socialised, stayed out late and once dated a gang-member. I stopped that relationship at the age of 17, the night I saw Donny embroiled in a gang- fight right in front of our house.

At high school, our teachers were truly interested in the struggle towards equality yet never neglecting our education. My maths teacher, Noel Daniels, took notice of me and his positive influence followed me for a very long time. I was bad at Maths but he told me that I had to just pass Maths and be good at something else. He took us for drama after school. He was bad at drama but I knew he was a good person. I needed a place to be after school and he was good company. My English teacher, Gail Prodhel, was another positive influence. She lauded me for writing well and reading extensively. She noticed when I used words that my peers did not. She knew that I was trading writing book reviews for Maths homework. She told me that I was "quite clever". Patrick Hendrikse was not my teacher as he taught Science which I did not do, but he knew my name and engaged me about my reading. Also, these teachers accompanied us on mass student rallies. They taught us beyond the syllabus. Noel and Gail treated me as equal to the other kids even when the other kids did not treat me as an equal. They recognised me beyond working-class background and that I was from Hanover Park. I was neat. My mother believed that we had to be clean and neat. She could not afford to buy

our school clothes so she sewed them herself. She made me polish my shoes and wash my underwear, socks and shirts every day. But it was also at high school that two male teachers sexually abused me. I resisted one by jumping out of a moving car. For my final high school year, my mother had saved so that I could enrol at one of only two private, multi-racial schools in South Africa. A small number of children in South Africa ever had the opportunity to interact across the racial divide in this manner during Apartheid. Again, being a child from Hanover Park, I was definitely an anomaly. I do not know how my mother afforded it as she received irregular maintenance payments from my father. Here, however, I found that I was accepted irrespective of where I lived. The strange thing was that these learners were of far higher social class status than my previous schoolmates. I had never hesitated in inviting friends to our single-bedroomed home in Hanover Park. I was never embarrassed about being poor. I dated sons of two of the wealthiest families at that school and had them visit our home. I was always honest about where I was from. In my current context, I find that this sometimes is a cause of discomfort. A quote from a newspaper clipping pasted above the light switch of the room on the wall of my beloved great aunt remains with me. This was where, as a young child, I had to take an afternoon nap. It read:

> *Poverty is no shame. It is just a damn (in pen someone had inserted the word 'temporary') inconvenience.*

The single-most important influence on my education was my love of books. Books carried me throughout my childhood of abuse, schoolyard ridiculing and feelings of non-belonging. I never felt hopeless about someday living in a leafy suburb – with many dogs, cats and shelves full of books like the rich. Having my sister be equally eager to walk the two kilometres to the library twice a week during holidays, helped. A kind white librarian allowed us to join a library even though we were not from the area. There were more books than in the Hanover Park library and it was a safer though further to walk. She allowed us to book out twice as many books allowed other children because she realised how far we had to walk to get to the library. So we read rather than spend time over vacations on the street corners which we could easily have done as most days we were unsupervised. I chose my rebellion carefully. For many of my peers, Hanover Park remained their world. Books about Black American children who struggled held special interest to me. I remember authors like Rosa Guy while myy middle-class high school friends were reading Mills and Boon. For me it was stories set in places I did not know which spiked my curiosity of a wider world.

Most of our high school teachers were dedicated to our success and introduced us to the notion of improving without destroying what is not perfect. These teachers started dismantling Apartheid

education and decolonising the curriculum in the 1980s, long before it became a publicly known term in the South African context. They added details to our lessons and risked their jobs in doing so. More than being aware of the racial inequalities, I became mindful of pervasive class structures. In different contexts, I found myself on one or the other side of the social and racial classification. At school and family gatherings I perceived that others might view me as lesser while in Hanover Park I was seen as a class up on the rest of the community. Whether this was my own perception and/or that of all others, is debatable but it is a mindfulness I have carried with me. Since coming to a white institution, I am alert to not so much of a class difference, but a heightened sense of the subtle racialisations and gender assumptions. Sexism exists in so many everyday ways that it is less obvious and deemed less reprehensible.

My first two years in higher education was at a Black only institution. I was the only English-speaking student doing a Nursing degree. I was considered pretty, groomed and had lustrous (straightened) hair. These factors meant proximity to whiteness. I knew what it was like being on the opposite end of such social favour, previously being considered not close enough to whiteness. I had grown up with the idea that being attractive was one way of achieving favour in an unjust society so I kept myself well-groomed and played my English first language as a status symbol. In one context, I could be a second-class citizen because of my social class and features while in another I was considered better because I was groomed, had hair that grew and spoke English. Then there were those privileged white girls, whose lives were considered more valuable than mine, being vaccinated against rubella while Black children were not. The repercussions of this caught up with me many years later at the age of 30 when I was pregnant with my first child. Even then, the embarrassment I felt at the surprise in the pre-natal class being the only Black woman and the only one who had not been vaccinated.

Once again, in Nursing, I did not fit. I found acceptance with only two fellow-students. While living in the residence for nurses, I detested the idea that the community had that the residence was associated with "loose" girls. It was nicknamed Koekblik (Cookie tin) referring to vaginas for men's choosing. Given that many nursing students were women and socialised to be desperate for a partner, there was a real problem of sexual abuse and date rape. There were also concerns about the students being lesbian and we were not allowed to sleep in the same beds. My friends and I would spend the nights together and go to our rooms before the cleaning staff, who would just unlock the doors to try to catch us "at it" and report us to the matrons. The residence and hospital was a cesspit of racism, sexism and classism. I was either revered or maligned for being English-speaking, not dating from the pool of men who would park outside the residence on weekends without knowing any of the students. Having "nice" hair (I used to straighten my very thick hair) and being sturvy (pretentious) or mistaken as upper class did not count in my favour with many women. I left nursing after two years and enrolled for a Bachelor of Arts degree. Our white undergraduate lecturers at university supported me when the government would not allow me a visa to study abroad when I received a scholarship offer. Unable to resolve the red tape, they arranged with the funders instead to transfer the money to my university and in turn to my personal account, promising on my behalf, that I would still complete my honours degree in South Africa. Education always remained my priority.

Not only because of the language differences but also my awareness of the politics and my willingness to fight for a just society. In my second year, I was summoned to appear before a panel of matrons for insubordination. The public Apartheid state-funded hospital was divided into separate wings and wards for white and Black patients and white and Black nurses also worked in respective wings and very seldom encountered the other side. When there was this increase in patients and shortage of nurses, some "coloured" nurses would be selected to work on the white wards. Many of the nurses wished to be sent there as it was more peaceful and working conditions were better. On the Black section the wards were crammed with too few beds for too many patients and turn around was quick. I spent the entire night making conversation with the white male patients who wanted constant attention.

I became more involved in the struggle against Apartheid. For years I hid my level of involvement from my mother until a neighbour showed her a picture of me on the cover of a newspaper surrounded by armed security forces; she was beside herself with anger. She had spent money on a year's private education but this did not stop both my sister and me from being actively involved in the fight against inequalities. It was a concern for many parents of children involved as there were many stories about

disappearances after arrests by the South African police. When I completed my undergraduate studies, a German company offered to fund me to further my studies abroad. The government education department denied me permission, without reason, to leave the country and my lecturer, the renowned political poet, Patrick Cullinan, arranged for the money to be spent on my further education in South Africa.

During my undergraduate studies, I saved up all of my bursary change and income from part-time jobs. Most other students, who, like me, did not grow up financially secure, spent their money on clothing and jewellery. I was 22 years old when I completed my degree, and with my bursary change bought an open plane ticket. I went to Palestine (Israel) on my own with no idea where I was going to stay or what I was going to do there. When I landed at Tel Aviv airport, I asked around and boarded a bus, took a lift on an army truck and found my way to the kibbutz. I worked there for a few weeks but wanted to see more of the country. I scanned the newspapers and I found a job as an au pair. I packed up and was once again off in a country I did not know. Sitting on the roadside at dusk an army truck full of soldiers offered me a lift to the nearest terminus. I asked around and I boarded a bus, asked around some more until I found my way to the town I was to work. I stayed with one family and worked for them and another in the same street. I made friends, travelled the country alone or with someone I had met and went off in different directions each time. As foreigners, we were warned to avoid Arabs and Muslims. Having grown up with Muslims as close neighbours and friends, I of course did not heed these warnings. I did not see it necessary and felt I would come to no harm. And I didn't. While staying there I realised two things which had profound influences on the rest of my life. 1. That as Black South Africans, we had the support of people outside our borders. Israel, was at the time an ally of the then banned African National Congress (ANC), and did not have strict visa requirements for Black South Africans. It was there that I saw a picture of Nelson Mandela for the first time. I had spent years chanting "Free Mandela" without ever seeing a picture of this future iconic national and international hero. 2. That "Apartheid" exists in other countries and people are often unaware of their own prejudices. Muslims in Israel suffered daily under a regime similar to and in ways some worse than that of Black people in South Africa. This was a rude awakening to the plight of another nation of people held hostage by oppression in their own country. The year was 1988.

From 1990 until 2006, I was a high school teacher at a low socio-economic school. I would tell my schoolchildren so what that we are Black and we are treated unfairly. I told them: "You don't have to live in Wonderland, but if you can see Wonderland, you know that it is real. Edge your way towards it, deliberately choosing our course, deciding our priorities. I know that it is not easy but once there,

we can occupy spaces and make them our own." Many learners did not want to be called Black and preferred "coloured". I told them that that was their choice. We spoke about segregation and what it had done to us as a nation. I wanted my learners to challenge authority and the dominant discourses as I had. I longed for them to grow beyond their parents' poverty and grow a fighting spirit against inequality and crime. My trajectory through higher education did not prepare me for the close proximity of such racist insensitivity that I experience currently. In many ways, racism was easier to address during the 1980s. Firstly, I was younger and felt only responsible for my comrades and myself. Secondly, like-minded people surrounded me as the students at my alma mater were all Black and our few white lecturers were all liberals. I completed my undergraduate studies at a "bush" university (for Black people=bushmen). I started a degree in nursing which I left after two years because I had been victimised at the segregated hospital where nursing students did practical training. The Black nurses attended the under-funded "bush" university while the white nursing students attended the over-funded whites-only university. We worked in separate wings of the segregated hospital. The year was 1987 and I felt politically compelled to give up on my first degree.

By this time I had completed my BA degree, had gone abroad and became a teacher. Both these were culturally popular careers for Black women, however, many Black students who followed these careers attended colleges for non-degree courses. Those of us who entered university were revered in our families although few of my family members really understood what university was about. In 1992, I completed an honours degree and had started teaching. Here I continued the fight for equity, this time with my students, as my teachers had done with me. I encouraged my students to enter university while at the same time I was one of the starting members of the illegal teachers' union. I was unafraid as we were threatened with being discharged from teaching. In good company however, we soldiered on.

I have forced a life in academia out of nowhere and nothing. If you, as readers, are not from South Africa and would like a better understanding of the life I described above, an internet search of news and images of the following areas may make this clearer:

5. Hanover Park, South Africa where I grew up will give you a basic view of my childhood experiences of poverty and gangs.
6. Rondebosch, a white English suburb and university town where, as a sixteen-year-old, I had promised myself that one day I would live.
7. Somerset West, a white suburb, where I now live.
8. Stellenbosch, a white Afrikaans suburb and university town where I work.

Part Two – Slow Shifts or No Shifts in Academia – 2007 to 2017

In 2006, suffering burnout, I resigned from my job as a teacher. My colleagues had always teased me about giving too much to the kids. They would say that for me teaching was a calling not a job. I tackled everything and everyone who were not acting in the interest of the children. I had often disagreed with the principal about issues of management style and a gradually worsening condition of the school. I approached parents about neglecting their children. We often housed poor school children while raising a family of our own. I worked after school in attempts to keep the vulnerable children off the streets. I listened and got invested in the well-being of children who were being abused. I would get up in the middle of the night to help children. My family life was suffering and so I intended to be a stay-at-home mom.

After a month being home, I felt that I needed to do something more and it didn't take much for a friend who was a lecturer to convince me to return to study. I enrolled for an MPhil degree – Intercultural Communication in Linguistics – at an institution that during Apartheid had been for white people only. I was surprised to see that this was still a largely white institution with few Black academics and students. Much like post-Apartheid schools, my perception was a re-segregated desegregated institution where cliques were formed in racial groups (Farmer, 2008). For many of the students whom I would soon come to lecture in the Social Sciences, Education and Engineering faculties, I would be their first and possibly only Black lecturer. Ever. I was disrespected by students across faculties. I had to prove myself not only to students but also to white colleagues who asked me if I was sure that the disrespect from students was racial. In the social sciences many white students claimed that they were tired of literature that centred on race. They, like many of their parents and white academics, felt it unnecessary in the new South Africa and that it was time to "just get over it already". It was up to me to show these white students why the other side of the history was important to them as well and how the Apartheid government had kept interesting facts from them in order to maintain disunity in our country. I often felt unsettled to the point of exhaustion. It took a different kind of effort to teach privileged white students than underprivileged Black students.

By the time I embarked on this PhD, there were still only a few Black women in academic positions. Over the next few years, the numbers were not going to increase at any significant rate and I wanted to investigate the reasons by tracking my own trajectory as well as those of other Black women. Cameo appearances seem secondary but are highly relevant to the detail of the thesis. In defence of my proposal in 2012, I was asked why I wanted to concentrate on Black women only. The panel member, a white woman, said that all women struggle in academia. Another panel member suggested

that I remove the word Black from the title and suggested the term "non-white". I often explain that I had never been a white woman so I could not write from that perspective and that Black people are not "non-white" as this suggests a deficit. I was asked to make substantial changes to my proposal, including the title. I had already been accepted to an international conference for later that month. On my return from the Social Research in Higher Education conference in Wales, I informed the panel I had won the prize for best presentation of a necessary and interesting PhD study. I also told them that other international institutions offered to supervise my PhD. I told them that I had decided not to change the title of my study. I made some of their suggested changes. My proposal was accepted in 2013. Two years later, at the same conference with a different panel of judges, I won best PhD presentation based on my methodology.

White colleagues will often tell me that I "have done well" and many "don't understand why all Black people can't also do what I have". Despite their superior education, they do not realise that if I could be on par with them, it means that I had had to work many times harder. It frustrates me that they do not see this as the massively unfair advantage they have had and which their children will continue to have over Black people. White colleagues ask me to explain how my life of impoverishment was different to their white poverty. I cannot explain how white privilege works to people who do not read and expect a Black woman to educate them. It is not possible to tell them how it affects one when society is set up to expect nothing of you. For most white people it is too much effort or too painful to engage with the literature on the Black experience. For this reason, they continue to fail at understanding how the violence of the legacy of Apartheid manifests, for example, in student protests. There is a level of understanding that cannot be achieved, when I tell them that while I may not condone violence, I understand resorting to it. I have often felt violently angry. I had once thrown stones at police vehicles. My colleagues do not know why I feel that it is exhausting to carry the burden of explaining and that after all the years of struggling against Apartheid and its injustices, I still am expected to contend with their passivity in transforming their thinking.

I am the angry Black women who dares to raise issues that render meetings uncomfortable. I do not want to be the one challenging a system which is oppressive, but much less do I want to operate in these spaces and not attempt to "correct" it. This is difficult in higher education contexts with a white majority unaccustomed to having cultures and structures that have always favoured them, questioned. I attempt to unravel and string together the intricate strands of the lives of a few Black women who did not become servants, washerwomen, factory-girls and shop assistants. I investigate the ways in which these few developed and continue the resilience to work and succeed in an academic space

that continuously marginalises us. With various constraints, we fought against an oppressive system of government. At the same time, we recognised and took advantage of limited enablers to defy the expectations of society.

By telling our stories together, we should tell the true history that in the past had (not) been written about us. I currently live a life so removed from the neglected Black girl child in small rooms and backyards. I remain aware that there are many girls left behind, starting school but who will not find a way out. These are not victim or hero narratives. The purpose is to make recognisable the resources needed for Black women to access and succeed in academia.

Working with white colleagues needed a different set of skills. In my first few months, I felt that there were things about the institution which they inherently knew and that these were not shared with me. It was not apparently deliberate on their part but their lack of awareness and their dismissal of my concerns meant that I did not trust their dedication to a new South Africa. Years later, however, I became convinced that there was a definite and deliberate shifting of the goal posts. There were parts of the job I could just not achieve because I did not know. On the other hand, there were also those nuanced incidences where I felt ignored or where they could have tried harder. Suggestions I made in meetings were often ignored, repeated by someone else and then noted. I felt and often still feel that there is a mentoring of new white colleagues that never happened with me. I noted that I would be taught lessons while white colleagues were mentored. From what I experienced I felt compelled to use my position as postgraduate Black student at what is still a very white institution, to publish a story which is alternate to what they are accustomed. This is not for the sake of being alternative, though.

Through this process of reflective writing, I learned about the influencing factors in my life. The culmination of this thesis is to develop contextual understanding, despite the differences in our narratives. A show of how culture and structure of higher education contexts influence, and could be influenced by, individuals. This is especially important for those perceived as marginalised. The interplay between the individual agent and her context affect how pathways are negotiated and what influence our trajectories. It may possibly garner understanding of and for all parties involved in especially higher education in order to enhance the experiences, engagement and inclusion.

During the early 1990s, "coloured" and Indian (not Black*) students could obtain special permission to be granted access to white universities by the white minister of education. This permission was granted only if Black Universities did not offer the subjects they wanted to study. Residences were segregated and the "coloured" students were not integrated. I remember how we watched from above*

the white students doing the "sokkie" (a white Afrikaner dance routine). The institution depicted the perfect white Afrikanerdom (Afrikaner kingdom).

The description shared above does not begin to relay the challenges, growth and understanding I shared with students and colleagues. I came to this institution in 2007 as a minority race and English First Language speaker. Although the Western Cape possibly has the largest mixed-race population, there were noticeably few students who were not white. Prior to 1994, it would have been difficult for a person of colour to register at this institution, but things had changed. This was also the institution where my children would one day pursue their degrees, but it was still viewed as the least reformed higher education institution in the country. In terms of racial disparity of staff and student body as well as the language policy, that revered Afrikaans as a dominant language, and many of its practices, not much had changed in over 20 years post-Apartheid.

I am blatant in my intolerance of racism and sexism, and this surprised most white people as well as many Black people. Many white staff and students accuse me of being "too aware of race", others deny that what I witness is racism. For many, I believe, that because I am Black and a woman, I am unable to teach them anything of value (hooks, 2010:99). A white man student in my English 1st year class tried to change his lecture time so that he could attend the white lecturer's class. When the department secretary refused, he attended my class but would not interact in class. The other students who were also white ignored him. He especially hated if the prescribed texts dealt with narratives of Black struggle. I told him that if he intended to pass the course, he would have to write the essays and that his essays had to be informed by the literature. The white Afrikaans students were generally ignorant of other groups in the country. An entire class of students did not know what Halaal meant and were unaware that Muslims and Jews do not eat pork. An entire class of students! They knew only Afrikaner culture and traditions. I was shocked as I had grown up with Muslims, Christians and an awareness of so much else. My own children were at primary school and had a broader world view than this class of university students. I used this opportunity to show these students the magnitude of the Apartheid government's influence. They had denied them as white people a full and varied education. We were all victims trying to survive in a country that was drowning in racism, prejudice and ignorance, exactly as the National Party government had intended.

When my white students protested that they did not want to read yet another story about Apartheid, I shared with them my own experiences, thinking that it would sensitise them to the realities of being racially discriminated against. Many simply said, "Black people should just "get over it"; I would wait a week or two and then read a heart-breaking story about the Anglo-Boer War and the British

concentration camps set up for white Afrikaners. Then I would ask who had grandparents who had suffered under British rule. They came back with stories from their parents and told them I learnt that at school as it was part of the history I was forced to learn at school. Then I told them to go and tell their parents and grandparents to "get over it". The impact was often successful. My students were easier to forgive because, proximally and mentally, we found communication easier back and forth and I always, irrespective of how they insulted me, in my powerful position as teacher, kept communication open. There were also, in every class, those who were sympathetic towards the anti-racism struggle or me. A semester was often enough for us to reach understanding, respect, and thoughtfulness, if not a total conviction. I am a damn good teacher and communicator. I saw them as part of a promising future generation and I loved my students. The prejudices, perceptions and denials I deal with in regard to structural and cultural issues with academics and administration in the institution, on the other hand, is a much more trying and exhausting experience. I assessed the assignments on awareness of author's biography and whether they raised issues of educational power between teacher and learner, poverty, privilege, gender influence, racial and class disparities in South Africa and role-modelling – all of which we had discussed in class.

The disruption of our lives happens in such an insipid manner that it is hard escape the indoctrination. If those of us who can, do not begin to tell of the past injustices and of the injustices that remain lurking, Black children are not able to see their way out of a life of misery and hopelessness where the Apartheid government had placed them. We need to push forward for them. I aim for accessibility to my research with practical and clear methods. In writing this thesis I constantly feel that I am on the brink and keep slipping to one side or the other. Let me start at the beginning of my life where many Black girls would be able to relate. The social and political world I was born into are no more important than the family into which I was born. They are all as relevant to my educational trajectory as researching for a doctoral degree.

Our stories come to us as memories, not in a linear fashion as they happen, but in the criss-cross of importance and relevance they effect on our lives. I have learnt that certain stories are like ghosts which haunt us until we recognised them. What wants to be told will come to mind first and foremost, pushing towards the front of our memories even as we try to deny them front row seats and holding our mouths shut for the sake of sparing feelings and keeping favour. But my stories sit and stare and stretch until they are addressed. Sometimes they demand to be worn as a garment for everyone else to see. Sometimes I wear them as undergarments or secret layers that I try to cover up to adhere to social decorum. Some people want to sit and listen to entire stories while others would prefer a filter

for easy consumption. Our stories of events can disrupt because they are a source of contention with others. While I try to remain sensitively aware of this, I do not forget that the repercussions of these events continue to disrupt Black lives.

The disruptions and violence are often invisible and it is my business to find a language to make visible. The violence does not necessarily knock the wind out of your gut; it is like tiny pinches and punches which injure systemically. I tell this story of education because the conditions are still not favourable.

I do not believe that everyone is part of the conspiracy but by being "wilfully unconscious" makes addressing the issues difficult. The intangible privileges are the hardest to describe to people. Irrespective of intentions, actions and comments come laden with the politics of the past. The reasons offered for non-action for the on-going atrocities and happenings in and around the institution speak volumes about how I think they perceive me. I feel defensive when white people speak to me about other Black people as though I am not Black, not realising my alliance. I can no longer try to speak to white colleagues about racist practices in residences where my children reside because I think that they think it is in our imagination.

The sense of belonging is never, in my lifetime, nor that of my children, going to be as complete as theirs or that of their children. A Black person's demand for food, books, and place is translated as a sense of entitlement while most white students automatically have these tools for success.

What has this research done for me?

Do I feel privileged? Yes, but it is not in the same way as someone who feels so entitled that they are not aware of their privilege. I am aware of my privilege in ways that most white people are not. Especially at an institution such as the one where I am employed. I have been supported beyond expectation. In so many ways it is my various close work groups of mainly women who have privileged me with their presence in my life. I have felt supported throughout my studies by the four women directors/deputy directors of the two centres where I work, as well as by my colleagues. Because this study deals with race and gender, I mention that they are 90% white women. Not only have they supported me in my studies with understanding and applications for leave, but I have also felt their empathy with me for having a chronically ill husband and teenage children when my attention is required during working hours. These women have prayed for me, messaged me outside of working hours and I know support my causes in both my presence and my absence. This research has made me realise my privilege over others because it has offered me a lens with which to reflect on my life filled with heartache and at times elation. Upon reflection, I have realised what has influenced my

decisions and actions. I feel privileged because I realise that I have been able to take from experiences, both negative and positive, which many of my counterparts have not been able to do. There seems for me to have been an odd but appropriate mix of occurrences that worked out just right.

The story of how I came to be here and the stories of how other women of colour came to be where they are, will still only be showing you what we feel comfortable with and what we have the vocabulary to share. These are not our full experiences because every day we are stifled by westernised norms of behaviour and dealing with life for which we have been inadequately prepared. There are stories only half told because we are not white. I still have to be on the defensive lest someone finds some defence for what happened and continues to happen, and I fail to count my words or bite my tongue. So while I can tell a part of the tale, I cannot explain the pain of having to work harder and think tougher and build up a thicker skin than someone else needs to. The intersection of my skin colour, my manner of speech, my hair texture, my under-educated and educated family, my background, my class, my Cape Flat-ness[2], together with woman-ness, is so much more than what others think they know. Every day I wonder whether, if I were to reveal freely, I would be accepted. At times, I felt that I was not saying the right things or doing things in the right way. I am jokingly told to "switch on my social filter" within the institution, I feel often that I am tolerated by some people – and that is a word I detest. I am slightly suspicious of almost every person who takes an interest in my academic development, whether they think that I am an easier project than most or a novel challenge.

This study has allowed me to view the perspectives of a few other Black women in academic positions so that our stories hold meaning not only to ourselves but also, by comparison, to others. I feel that in order to improve the numbers I have to focus not only on the high numbers of Black women who have not acquired postgraduate degrees or relevant positions in higher education. I want to recognise those who are here or nearly here and focus on why we still feel like we are too uncomfortably close to the margins. This thesis shows up the similarities and diversity of Black women's experiences. That we are individuals and not a homogenous group, who have lived through similar scenarios. By adding voices of other Black women, I want to show the strengths of Black girls and women gained by being skilled in dealing with adversity but also to give recognition to the manner in which elders, directors (teachers and parents) unknowingly enable or constrain us to take up the pathways to and in higher

[2] People from the Cape Flats commonly speak with a loud, "flat" accent called Cape Flats accent.

education. Black women may recognise and acknowledge what we, through narratives, could possibly offer incoming academics and management at higher education institutions. Not as heroes, but as forerunners.

Through autoethnographic research I put into language, not only the visible viciousness of the Apartheid system, but also attempt to clarify the invisible threats and passive violence that continues to overflow into the present. It is not my intent to speak on behalf of anyone but that this thesis could make visible further pathways for marginalised people to make their experiences known.

Denying the invisible and unmentionable violence of the past and present is the reason we do not possess the language to describe these experiences. Sharing experiences in whichever words we do possess makes it a reality and, in this way, we counter the erasure of experiences of the othered. Silence and silencing mean that the feelings continue to go unrecognised, making it easy to continue to practice invisible violence in the current contexts. This is part of the process of developing, for the reader, and me, an understanding other the realities. It may help to turn the nuances and the invisible experiences into words and language. Thus, should it appear by the end of this thesis to be one of the reasons that Black women are still failing at higher education, we will be closer to acknowledging feelings and possibly recognise the continued disruption of our trajectories by practices in institutional culture that were learned through Apartheid.

Chapter One

Rationale of the Study

> *Decolonising research processes…helps envision other ways of theorising the complexity of gender [race, class] and educational experiences. It is this understanding that will help to build bridges to enable the formation of genuine alliances between indigenous and Western feminisms that are grounded in ethicality and transformative respect and healing. – Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010*

1.1 Introduction

Worldwide many Black girls and women, more than any other group of people, remain behind in dire conditions and remedying upliftment from these conditions requires complex quantitative and qualitative research. However, Black girls and women are succeeding at education, with some reaching influential positions, despite the historic and continual social powers or constraints against them. This research is limited to South African social justice prospects in the educational processes for Black women in academia but may in the end, offer recommendations for institutions globally. In increasing the understanding of the enablers employed by Black women in overcoming their constraints deserve investigation towards the goal of global social justice. Taking up research about the lives of Black women already in academic positions is just one way to addressing continued racist, classist and sexist issues encountered all along the porous passage of education in South Africa (Mabokela, 2017).

This thesis is an autoethnographic study and the themes are decided on from the representation of my own experiences. It includes narratives of the educational journeys of a few Black women in South African academic institutions. These experiences are thematically compared with the experiences of five other Black women in similar positions in institutions in higher education institutions (HEIs) in South Africa. The preface of this research is not essential reading (so some repetition may occur in the body of the thesis) but offers autobiographical detail about my own educational trajectory. My narrative may be awful or awesome, but it is one narrative. Other Black women have had worse experiences

and achieved much more in life than I have. Only when we retell do we get to fully know ourselves and what we have achieved and turned into enablers despite societal constraints.

In 2007 I resigned from a job as a high school teacher and returned to university to study for a Master's degree in Intercultural Communication in Linguistics at Stellenbosch University. The last time I had been on Stellenbosch campus had been in 1992 during the Apartheid years. At the time, I had not been allowed to study at this institution and was registered for an honours degree at the University of the Western Cape, an institution for Black students. That night in June 1992, it was already dark when I drove in my beaten-up Mazda to get to this campus. On my way, the wheel of my car came loose, and I had to stop to have it fixed. I arrived at the library after 19h00 and begged the security to allow me access. A final essay was due and I needed to use a book which was not available at UWC but which I knew would be available at SU. The security guard asked the librarian who asked to see my student card. I was allowed access for the 45 minutes before the library closed.

In 2007, post-Apartheid, I could study where I wanted, live where I wanted and SU is the closest university to where I live. After completion of my Master's degree in 2009, I was interviewed and joined the Centre for Teaching and Learning as an academic advisor for the professional development of lecturers. The centre employed about 12 advisors, 2 of whom were "coloured".

In 2013 I registered for a PhD with the then director of the centre, Brenda Leibowitz, as my supervisor. My proposal was eventually accepted after scepticism, questioning and what I perceived as denial of silent racial prejudice around my topic, then entitled *Black women academic's experiences in higher education institutions in South Africa*. I think that defending a doctoral proposal in front of a highly academic panel is uncomfortable for any candidate, but as a Black woman defending a topic on Black women in a white male dominated university, the discomfort is indescribable to anyone who is not Black.

I relay here an excerpt of my proposal defence as I recall. I was understandably anxious, and my recollection may not be exact but the argument is. The panellists were all white and or male.

Panellist 1: Why are you concentrating on Black women in academia? Don't all women have challenges?

Co-supervisor: The candidate aims to investigate being a woman and a Black person.

Panellist 2: I think the candidate should be allowed to investigate participants of her choice.
Panellist 1: Is there not another term to use instead of "Black"?
Panellist 4: Maybe "non-white"?
Me: No. I want to use the term "Black".
Supervisor: "Non-white" is a derogatory term.

The disappointment I felt after this interview is indescribable and I was in tears when I was told that I would have to return for a re-defence. I had failed! However, I was already accepted to present at the international Social Research in Higher Education conference a few weeks later. My director said that I of course I should still go and present my work. I did and won second prize for the best doctoral study. Two years later and with a different panel of judges, I won first prize at this conference.

I had wanted to respond to Panellist 1 that I can only speak as a Black woman as I had never been a white woman. The under-representation and lack of understanding of our positions as Black women in academia in HEIs is a global phenomenon (Essed, 1992), with some unique aspects pertaining to South Africa. South Africa is a country with an approximately 92% Black (including "Coloured", Muslim and Indian) population. It has many of the top HEIs on the African continent and more Black women who complete undergraduate degrees. The expectation may be that the number of Black women accessing and succeeding in postgraduate studies and academic positions should be higher than in other countries, but this is not the case (Mabokela & Magubane, 2004; Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010; Maodzwa-Taruvinga & Divala, 2014; Liccardo & Botsis, 2015; Carolissen & Kiguwa, 2018a). At times there is both a conscious and an unconscious shifting of the goal posts for Black women in academia. There is also a conscious and unconscious hesitation in myself, at times, to move ahead or speak up even when I know I should. I am one of two Black women (non-senior) advisors. There are eight other (white) advisors (including the deputy-director and the director), six of whom are senior, even those who have started after us. I have questioned the situation both aloud and silently. The closest I have come to describing the explanations offered is "unreasonable reasoning".

A Black woman in a middle or senior academic position in South Africa is still an anomaly. There are numerous and complex reasons that policies on equity and transformation do not transform to practice. In this thesis the phenomenon as to how some of us got to be here is

investigated. The aim of this research is to show how, by use of a narrative framework, this can change. This investigation aims to make suggestions as to how Black women and HEIs can increase individual and institutional success. The thesis follows the above preface of the empirical evidence of a mixed-race woman and focusses on the educational trajectory of Black women. We were not educated or expected to succeed as academics, yet the women in this research work as academics or in academic advisory roles in various HEIs in the Western Cape (WC). We all grew up during Apartheid's most restrictive and turbulent times. By law, we were segregated and disadvantaged educationally, socially and culturally. We started high school during the historical student uprising and completed our undergraduate studies amidst violent protests against the Apartheid regime on our campuses. All of our families were educationally, economically and socially impoverished because we are Black. If, theoretically, having better personal, cultural and structural enablers helps to achieve a goal, then it is reasonable to assume that having more constraints will hinder the achievement towards the same goal. For white men (and most white women) higher education is an entitlement and a rite of passage. For most Black women it is an almost impossible, wayward dream set against the odds. The Apartheid regime, our families and communities played a role in our psychological make-up. This research investigates what advanced and what hindered our academic progress.

The primary objective of this thesis is to find the repertoire of influences, personal and institutional, that helped these women to succeed. The primary data for the thesis is the narrative record of the researcher. As a mixed Black woman in South Africa, I have been inequitably (dis)enabled because of my skin tone. Proximity to whiteness with a fairer complexion and softer curl pattern affords me advantages over other Black women. I explain later how Indian and "Coloured" people enjoy persistent levels of advantage over African Black people. Mindful of the levels of discrimination and disadvantage of various groups of the disenfranchised, however, for the purpose of this study, I refer to Black as what is known as "Biko Black", a notion from Steve Biko's Black Consciousness Movement (Khan, 1990; West, 2006).

1.1.1 Decentred Black women

Most Black women at this university are administrative staff. My position is within the support structure of the institution, however, much of our work is academic and we work closely with lecturers. My name is also often misread as the masculine Jean (pronounced

Sjahn, a popular white French-Huguenot or Afrikaner name), so when meeting people for the first time after email communication, my perception is that often there is not the expectation of a kinky-haired, olive-skinned woman. Academia is a microcosm of broader society that places Black women farthest from the centre of opportunities (Roxå, 2015). Over the past ten years, as a Black woman who has had numerous racialised experiences, not least looks of noticeable surprise at my position in the institution.

> *45% of all academic staff employed in public HEIs are Black (African, Coloured, Indian/Asian), while 67% of all administrative staff are Black. Females comprise 45% of all academic staff employed at public HEIs, 63% of all administrative staff and 41% of all service staff. UNISA employs the highest number of academic staff (1 515), followed by the University of KwaZulu-Natal (1 470) and the University of Pretoria (1 281). (StatsSA, 2016)*

This first chapter problematises absence and the under-representation of Black women, in postgraduate degree courses, senior management and academic domains in Higher Education South Africa (HESA) (Mabokela, 2003; Mabokela & Mlambo, 2017). Research evidence shows that a complex web of policies, practices and individual and cultural beliefs continue to support the marginalisation of Black women in academia (hooks, 1994; Collins, 2000; Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010; Yuval-Davis, 2010). As evidence of how inherent the misrecognition of Black women is, I highlighted in grey above "Black woman" and "Black. Females" in two paragraphs of this chapter. The first excerpt is how "Black women" should be referred to, while the second is how "Black" (meaning men and women) and "female" (meaning white and Black) are separated in statistics. This separation makes it difficult to recognise the absence or under-representation. Black women are decentred, rendering us as dis-counted (not counted) and this contributes to us remaining the most marginalised even post-Apartheid. The statistics reflect the equity policies that define previously disadvantaged groups to include white women and Black men on the same level as Black women. Thus, the manner in which many institutions report on student enrolment and staff numbers portrays ignorance of the intersectional influences of being Black and a woman. Kimberle Crenshaw (1989) highlighted this issues of intersectionality forty years ago in "All the Women are White: All the Men are Black".

South African HEIs renege on the responsibility to advance education for all and maintain the status quo with the greatest expense to Black women. Academic institutions are historically set up to possess a "self-reproductive power" for white men (Arday & Mirza,

2018b) and to be structurally and culturally exclusionary, particularly of Black women. In support of this argument, statistical evidence on HEIs and numerous qualitative studies on the experiences of Black women report (Essed, 1992; Mabokela, 2000; Nunley, 2009; Isoke, 2013). HEIs not only continue to ignore Black women's experiences, they defend themselves by claiming that the lack of Black women with postgraduate qualifications and in senior positions is due to Black people seeking higher paid employment in private sectors (Mabokela, 2000; Kang'ethe & Chivanga, 2016). The excuse of "academic flight has become a rational response to institutional neglect and to the disparaging of scholarship that dares to treat Dubois, Said and hooks with same seriousness that it treats Foucault" (Arday & Mirza, 2018b:viii).

The principles of intersectional feminism, often referred to as third-wave feminism, apply (Collins, 2000; Mirza, 2009; Ahmed, 2014; Hernandez, Ngunjiri & Chang, 2015; Arday & Mirza, 2018b). Intersectional feminist theory requires a methodology that includes perceptions of participants. An inductive, narrative analysis approach will be used for excerpts of the data written as the researcher's autobiography and recorded interviews with Black women. I explore the various societal and individual reasons that Black women's educational trajectories can and do become truncated. Intersectionality recognises that Black women have many possible and different experiences that affect the way we perceive similar events.

Apartheid laws, and practices (prior to the laws being passed), exacerbated and deeply entrenched notions of superiority and inferiority in South African citizens. The effects can be likened to melted layers that are hard to peel apart. Due to the Apartheid government's shrewd practice of slightly favouring one marginalised group (Indian and "coloured") over the other (African Black), inter-Black prejudices also occurred. In this thesis, the application of the social justice and intersectional critical lens is used to interrogate a society that fails to fully understand the constraints and enablers of institutional culture on individual agency. Most factors in social sciences are only measurable as probable (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The culture, supported by material structures, emboldens those who habitually position themselves closest to the lucrative and influential centre while the Black woman remains in silenced servitude (Crenshaw, 1989; Essed, 1992; Nunley, 2009; Riach, 2017). Darwinism purports that due to the evolutionary course, Black women, by nature, would be least likely to achieve higher cognitive skill and thus least of all, academic success. Hierarchical societies afford the highest chances of gaining privilege to those who are white and male.

The basic premise of focusing on Black women is that all males and all whites benefit from their gender and/or race. Everyone is "above" the Black woman and considered more human in behaviour, more intelligent in mental ability and more in control of their emotions. Black women, perceived to be least able, are most vulnerable and most subjected to negative types of research. This was evident in a very recent retracted study in South Africa that focuses on the lower cognitive abilities of "coloured" women (news24.com article – 3 May 2019; Mail & Guardian – 10 May 2019).

1.1.2 Relaying narratives

This thesis is not a tidy, linear or complete model of the processes that affect the trajectories of the women involved as participants. A critical and reflective framework asserts that we cannot get to know ourselves or our society well enough to change it unless we recognise and understand the discourses in our society that influence our lives (Clegg, 2016). Gaps occur in our narratives as we attempt to describe the challenges as racialised and gendered persons. The reason is that the events we recall are only those with a memorable effect and those that we may consider of immediate value to our narratives. Events that are painful are sometimes forgotten and only remembering in retelling of one event may trigger the memory of another. Gaps also occur because certain events may not be recalled even though they could have lasting impact. Foucault (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011) confirms that memories of our life trajectories and learning do not occur in chronological order, as is often espoused by Western ideologies. Where we begin our trajectories is not of our choosing. Whether we possess the means and tools to later choose how we lead our lives, also depends on many factors outside of our control. These factors include the notions of gender and racial strata (Crenshaw, 1989; Luckett & Luckett, 2009; Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010; Akala & Divala, 2016). For many Black women, the notion of their racial and gendered inferiority, compared to everyone else, is a colonial ideology (Lugones, 2007, 2010). Often race trumps gender as a remembered influencing factor because gender has been more naturalised in most societies. So, if a Black woman comes from a community where there are no white people, she most likely still experienced gender discrimination within her family or community. Also, gender discrimination happens from birth and we are more socialised towards it. Awareness of racial discrimination comes with more interaction with the society outside of the home (Sòlorzano & Yosso, 2001; Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010; Evans-winters & Esposito, 2010).

The depth and range of feelings and thoughts often dictate the order when we tell of our experiences. Psychology shows that the order of our narratives are guided by our emotions because our narratives are laden with feelings (Freeman, 1993; Murray & Beglar, 2009). Emotionality is often seen as the negative "female" trait (Ahmed, 2014), especially negative if it be an angry Black woman. Black women's narratives are less relevant because they may be more emotional and less rational (Ahmed, 2014:3). For most, if not all, Black women gaining access to a postgraduate programme of study could be equivalent to a white person reaching secondary school for all the constraints one suffers and the enablers the other has at her disposal. Consideration of my own narrative, which includes neglect, years of sexual abuse in the home, classism, racism, inferior education, no hot running water, asbestos housing and schools, makes me aware that two stories cannot be equally compared. In order to record our trajectories depends on the language at our disposal and the audience who will read our stories. Said (1975) indicates that writing, thinking and creating a beginning is complex. Our beginning is often heresay and not always our actual memories. Tracking socio-educational trajectories of Black women should come from historical records or the stories of others. These portrayals ignore the human aspect of being a Black woman and are highly subjective to the role of her existence in servitude to white colonisers and Black men.

Autoethnography as a methodology and intersectional research are apt means to relay lived experiences of those marginalised in society. They add additional lensing for understanding more than the sum of inequalities suffered by Black men and white women. Kimberle Crenshaw (Crenshaw, 1989) expresses, through origination of the phrase intersectionality, the effects of the power differentials of race, gender, sexual preference, social status and class which exist but are often ignored. These differentials form her own and others' perceptions of her and affect the interplay within her context in unique and mostly adverse ways. Autoethnography that includes biographic, ethnographic and action research allows a critical interpretation of beliefs and assumptions about self in society. It opens critique of practices and policies that the limits of this thesis cannot fulfil.

1.2 Background to the study

The number of Black women in academic and senior academic positions has not increased significantly in the past 20 years in post-Apartheid South Africa. This despite changes in policy, bursary offers, and challenging institutions with regard to equity and equality.

Various excuses are offered to counter this reality and offered by institutional management and other mostly white and male scholars (Lekgotla, 2017). Their excuses include: Black women who obtain postgraduate degrees prefer more lucrative professions in the private sector; but there are Black women who reach high level senior positions so there should be no reason that other Black women should complain about lack of opportunities or hide behind the numerous constraints. The person, who offered the logic in the last statement, proceeded to name the three Black women in South Africa. She did not realise that her ability to name them actually supports my argument. The perception I got from this is that those who do not achieve are not working hard enough or are just not clever enough. It cannot be acceptable that such a small percentage of qualified Black women are hard-working enough to achieve seniority in HEIs.

The number of studies by and about Black women's experiences is evidence that Black women are interested in pursuing academic careers and do remain in HEIs for that purpose. Comparatively, much fewer Black women than any other group are recognized as legitimate and deserving scholars (Mabokela, 2003; Di Masso, 2015). The problem I address in undertaking this study is that in light of continued under-representation, the lived experiences of full educational trajectories of Black women academics are under-researched. This signifies that few researchers take note of the plight of Black women academics. Many Black women academics are not located in social research contexts and are too busy proving themselves in other areas to take up research about the reasons for lack of promotion. Unless Black women publish their narratives, our stories remain hidden. The onus to collaborate and publicise these narratives rests with social researchers. In this way, Black women in other fields can get on with the business of being academics.

Perceptions play a critical role and have to be acknowledged as influencing the progress of every other group but one. For a comprehensive view of the quantitative data, the Black woman's perspective of her own identity is imperative. As a Black woman who is also part of an academic development cohort, it would be remiss of me to ignore that very part of the marginalised population I came from as a child and which I am again part of in academia. What weighed foremost on my mind as I embarked on this journey, was justice and equity for Black girls who start life in hopeless situations and have to be braver, more tenacious and bear the burden of proof for the love of education. My opinion is formed by my experience that as a Black woman I have to exhaust myself in additional ways compared to

white men, white women and Black men in order to get promoted. This has led to the formation of the questions I respond to in this thesis.

1.3 Research questions

The research questions aim at guiding the focus from my own narrative to the narratives of other Black women, our sense of belonging and not belonging in the academic space in South Africa. It is imperative to gain insight into the socio-educational experiences and the perceived influencers along the pathways. The questions' design is to gauge the participants' perceptions of self and culture of past and current experiences in educational contexts:

i) How do South African Black women academics experience and account for the interplay between self and South African HEIs contexts?
ii) How do they respond to these within their contexts?
iii) What do Black women perceive as factors that influence their experiences and interplay?

1.3.1 Research aims

The core issue in transforming higher education is no longer that Black women and men do not have access, but rather that most do not progress beyond undergraduate qualifications. Completion rates in undergraduate studies for Black women have increased more than any other group (Lehohla, 2016). However, few Black women occupy senior positions in the academic arena (Beckmann, 2009; McKenna & Boughey, 2014; Akala & Divala, 2016; Clegg, 2016). The aim of this qualitative study is to investigate the interplay between Black women and the institutional context. This is so that we may consider what influences and can possibly improve our experiences in achieving senior degrees and positions in HE. The methodology is to investigate narratives of Black women who have achieved relative success with the purpose of offering guidance to individuals and institutions. The narratives of Black women in HEIs are not to be normalised and are considered as alternate or counter-narratives (Solòrzano & Yosso, 2001; Bamberg & Andrews, 2004). This is a tricky balance because we are neither a homogenous group nor are we absent from HEIs. The term counter-narrative is often problematic, and also in this instance because there are a large number of Black women academics teaching in our institutions (Mabokela, 2003; Mabokela, Reitumetse Obakeng & Mawila, 2004; Divala, 2014). The ultimate significance of this thesis should be the call for in- depth interrogation of the multiplicity of ways in which individuals, institutions and society can ideally create an interplay to unravel the cultures

and practices which keep Black women at bay from senior positions. The idea is toward enhancing the representation of Black women's success and leadership in academia.

1.3.2 Research objectives

The narratives should inform individuals, institutional and governmental leadership of the possible interplay between the individual and the institutional culture and structure. Furthermore, the narratives should facilitate an understanding of what past and current factors influence this interplay. To this purpose, the educational trajectory of each individual will be employed by way of exploring factors that affect this interplay between each individual and her institutional context. The primary objective is to find the means to work towards increasing the representation of Black women in senior positions in academia.

1.3.3 Scope and limitations of the research

The researcher's subjective view of self as a mixed-race person limits this research. I am not fully Black and my proximity to whiteness affords privileges not enjoyed by people with fully Black ancestry. The themes that the researcher concentrates her study on are those highlighted by her own experiences. This limitation, however, indicates the importance of individuals' reflection on their own narratives and their role in the interplay within their institution. A further limitation is that every institution is similar and dissimilar in various aspects of its culture and structure. Black women who participated in this study have had both similar and unique combinations of enablers and constraints. Our differing perspectives of the same era and events would have implications on the understanding of certain concepts, for example "disadvantage", "racial classification", and "social class". Detailed narratives cannot be achieved within the limits of a doctoral thesis. Analysis of the data would differ using a different theoretical lens and methods. Due to time and financial constraints, participants represent limited South African universities only in one province. Different contexts would garner different experiences and results.

1.4 Significance of the research

Some Black women persist with an educational desire, against the recognised and unrecognised social, educational, historical and psychological intimidation inherent in advanced educational achievement. Some institutions are better at enabling Black women along their trajectories. Related research reveals similar reasons that many Black women fail at completing their education and achieving success in academic positions. Other

research offers understanding of common and individual experiences, mostly negative, of Black women in higher education. Yet other research interrogates ways of overcoming the negative aspects of institutions in order to succeed. This research aims to use the background of the work already done to enhance the opportunities inherent within individuals and institutions to grow the number of Black women academics.

This research goes some way in opening and addressing the ways in which individuals and institutions can appreciate the strengths of Black women's understanding of the efforts it takes to achieve academic success. It weighs up the development of sense of self from past experiences to be able to check her role as player within institutional contexts. Institutions need to meet the needs for more Black students to succeed and for how attuned it is towards this aim. This thesis intentionally offers a method of research that can open access for multiple individual and institutional narratives towards increasing the number of Black women academics. Without apportioning blame, the investigation is about finding out which aspects of identity and institutional culture need to be addressed to field a passage for offering ways to increasing success. Comparative insights are valuable for aligning transformational goals.

1.5 Contextual position of the research

Education, teaching, learning and research happen within economic, social and political contexts. South African universities are emotive zones of complexity and discomfort because of our Apartheid history. Related to this is Higher Education South Africa (HESA) being embedded in Christian, historical and linguistic ideologies. Black women in this context, as in most South African contexts, are seldom the recognised protagonists. At intervals, such as during the #FeesMustFall movement where Black women were at the forefront of protests, the minority loudly challenges the dominant (Lewis & Hendricks, 2017). Black women's voices almost always seem contentious and their narratives are out of the norm and as challenging the status quo of white/male dominance. From the other side i.e., those benefiting from the status quo, there is a tardiness at attempting to understand the inequities, inequalities still experienced by the majority in post-Apartheid academia. Guarding white male dominance, using some white women and Black men as allies, further complicates the task of advancing Black women in academia (Ahmed, 2014; Leibowitz, Bozalek, Farmer, Garraway *et al.*, 2017).

A willing ignorance, if not denial, exists that every Black woman who has ever achieved any success has had to work harder, smarter and with more bravery than anyone else has. In addition to this, honesty about her experiences taxes her with the constant fear that she is viewed as wanting favour, as being overly critical and ungrateful for opportunities. Being subjected to unequal education and then having to compete, as equal and on par, with those who were advantaged is another way of holding Black women back. Henkeman (2016:8) refers to this as the "[e]pistemic violence in universities". She describes how marginalised and oppressed individuals have to make their knowledge, and their research, fit Euro-centric notions in order for it to be valued. International and national calls to pay attention to the number of Black women academics make painful narratives an inescapable part of moving forward. Painful because of denialism on the part of white academics, but also that as Black women academics we must then confront our, possibly unrecognised, complicity in these dominant narratives. Attempting to succeed with pain while fighting is one more burden for Black women to bear. Challenging the dominant discourse in academia is exhausting and requires imminent understanding. The onus should be shifted.

1.6 Unreasonable reason

The cognitive dissonance of white South Africans to the experiences of Black women is in part due to the absence of a vocabulary to describe our unique difficulties. This allows the continuation of nonsensical or unreasonable reasoning. The privileged white person can hide behind the dominance of language and the misunderstanding is often blamed on the Black person who is perceived as failing to use language appropriately. Language use is a common defence mechanism used by white people to ask Black people to "please explain what you mean" or "tell me what I said that you perceive as politically incorrect" and even that "it is exhausting to always try to be politically correct". Another common reaction is "all the facts are in the literature" and it is hard to place the feeling that "something is missing". The person to whom the question is posed finds it difficult to explain the nuances. I list a few examples of this kind of reasoning as I have recently personally encountered and argued:

i) In searching for data on "Black women" in the official national report VitalStats (2013), as well as other statistical data of institutions, it was difficult to describe what was missing: specific data on being "Black" and specific data on being "women" were there. What was not being counted was "Black women". We are grouped with white women and Black men equally as "previously disadvantaged". This made us invisible and it is an invisible affront to Black

women. This is what I would term misrecognition or nonrecognition, and the argument seems unreasonable because it is an unnamed issue which no-one else seems to miss. Post-Apartheid Black women seem as irrelevant in the institution as in the hundred years before.

ii) Arguments about gender-based violence are countered with statistics which reasonably reflect that Black men are more likely than Black women to be victims of violent crime. This is true but it fails to acknowledge that Black men are most often the perpetrators of violence amongst themselves and against women. Black children and women are most often innocent, and without soliciting, victims of war and crime.

iii) When I explained my research reason that Black women are under-represented because of an institutional culture of discrimination, my argument was countered with "but XX (she named one specific Black woman in a top institutional position) could achieve success", insinuating that my statements are untrue and that I was looking for excuses for those of us who are either lazy or incompetent.

iv) I am considered by some white women as more privileged than themselves because I own property in an upper middle-class suburb while others do not. No appreciation is shown for the fact that I started out with less cultural, economic and educational opportunity.

The factors that affect Black women entering academic and managerial positions are numerous. There is a disparaging view that we are not grateful for the opportunities we have been given or that we have not made proper use of those opportunities.

1.7 The researcher

I am often met with expressed admiration at my trajectory, as if I am a hero-figure. Agreeing with ideologies which claim that there are well-defined categories in which to place human experience would be shying from the political agenda that addressed historical, economic and educational factors in individual narratives (Lather, 2006a). This empirical research is messy because there are no binaries, either/or for all individuals even if we seem to be from the same group. Investigating and recognising that "historical specificity and political analysis" are "deeply part of" who we are (Lave, 2012:157 cited in Leibowitz, Garraway & Farmer, 2015:23), makes a critique of culture and context both exciting and scary. I set out to innovate a methodology which could extrapolate experiences, and which could pose challenges in the academic context in South Africa.

The process of interrogating my autobiography through autoethnography has forced me to address my fragility as a Black woman who has a chaotic and painful past. Through writing my narrative I have discovered that childhood experiences had been constraining. In hearing the narratives of other Black women, I realised that it was not as bad as it is for the majority of Black children in South Africa (Eynon, 2017). I use my life story to relay a history of a

Black girl and women in her desire for the level of education which was withheld. I use my memory as a tool to access where my strength was pulled from to take me on this journey. I identify the hurdles and the bridges as signposts to others to look out for in their own work. I hope that reading this thesis makes the embodied experiences of other Black women more real for you. If this is similar to your own story, I hope that it encourages you to raise your voice because I am not the historian of anyone else's story.

Picture: My older sister and me in 1969 where we lived in a corrugated sink and wooden structure in a backyard in Maitland, Cape Town. Three years later we moved to an ugly, gang-ridden slum called Hanover Park, named after Hanover in Britain, on the Cape Flats, where we would live for 15 years.

The reflective nature of this thesis, in the form of an autoethnography, tries to extract details of my life, seeking unique details of why I did not end up like most poor Black (classified "coloured") girls in South Africa. At the start of my reflection, I did not know the reasons that my life turned out as it did. I did not know what reflecting and analysis of my narrative would elicit.

The biographical parts of the narrative were written more than some forty years after the above picture was taken. I was born in 1966, which is the same year that Apartheid became a legal state in South Africa. During these years Black people were not considered full citizens in their own country, could not own property and were made to carry a *dompas* (a document which indicated that they were allowed in the cities to work for white masters). Those of us considered "coloured" or mixed race, and most importantly did not look African Black (as some mixed-race people do) were not required to carry these documents. We were also more likely to get jobs inside white households or in closer contact with white bosses. The reader is offered some insight to the educational pathway of many Black girls,

especially indigenous African and "coloured" girls who grew up under Apartheid laws. I acknowledge here that many Black girls' lives are/were much more difficult than my own. Black girls' educational trajectories are influenced and impacted by a myriad of factors, not least because she and others are raised to feel that she is worth less and does not belong (Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010; Holt, 2012). Unfortunately, the impact is that few Black girls achieve education which they would be capable of under favourable conditions. As was the intent of the Apartheid regime, Black girls are most likely to be left behind suffering under societal and cultural constraints (Akala & Divala, 2016). It is towards change of their reality and those of us who go before them that I write this thesis. I wish for us a journey marked by smoother sailing. I want these Black girls (and boys) to have the same academic challenges which come with being academics as white girls and boys, with not one of them belonging to a grouping too poor or inferior to succeed. For me, the first step in this is to address the real and perceived enablers and constraints and our interplay within our contexts.

9. I had assumed that because I was studying myself and others with whom I largely shared a culture, the research would not take much longer than four years. The data proved to be richer and added to the authenticity of the data collection experience. I had also thought that most Black women academics shared and knew about intersectional studies and the politics around their situations. This proved incorrect, as many knew of feminism only in its broadest terms. I had no idea that interrogating self and others' perceptions meant rewriting and revisiting the same descriptions repeatedly. The responsibility of properly representing others and institutions requires deeper consideration of one's own views. In the end I found the research, defending the research, and explaining the many intersections an emotionally exhausting task (Yuval-Davis, 2006; Butler, 2013) and I became ill numerous times.

1.7.1 My health

10. I had gotten seriously ill numerous times over the past 6 years. I had numerous operations and suffered strokes. Over the years I often needed time in between to "recoup" from reliving trauma during the processes of writing, expressing my emotions and thoughts. While the stress caused may have been only my perception, I often found myself choosing and changing my words so I sounded less accusing and hurt (Tsalach, 2013; Mohope, 2014; Lourens, 2016). In most medical and health theories, the psychological relates to physical health. Except for one woman doctor, all the doctors I had consulted attributed my strokes to the stress of being an academic, wife, mother and student. I knew that it was more than these factors. I knew but could not explain that the extent of my physical condition directly relates to my being a Black academic at a white institution doing research on Black women. Fanon and Biko allude to our psychological awareness of Blackness as having unique effects on our mental and physical health. Our embodied experiences of "political oppression" over

> decades can make us ill in numerous ways (Henkeman, 2016a, 2016c; Lewis & Hendricks, 2017). Over the years, I had an emergency gall bladder removal, and a necessary hysterectomy due to endometriosis. This resulted in my bladder being damaged and having a catheter inserted for six weeks. In 2017, I suffered an eye stroke one Friday afternoon at work. This resulted in permanent partial blindness. It was traumatic for my family as my son was writing his exams for MB,ChB II and my daughter had just started her final school exam. I felt bad that I had been ill so often the past years, so I returned to work the following Monday to run a four-day residential writing retreat. The first night I drove myself to the hospital when I felt like another stroke was coming on. It took two years with therapy to adjust to blindness in my left eye and then in 2019, I suffered another stroke, which resulted in hospitalisation. Two brain scans and a spinal tap revealed multiple lesions after numerous strokes over the years. Specialists were amazed that I still functioned "normally". There is no way I could explain the extent of the drain I felt to anyone.

1.7.2 Family life

My family and I experienced numerous challenges in these years, which included serious illness for three of the four of us, parents and other loved ones passing away and a home intrusion by three men while I was alone at home. Throughout 2019 and 2020 I was involved in an acrimonious divorce.

1.8 Ethical considerations

This research is low-risk as there is some psychological consideration for researcher's relatives and colleagues. The same considerations must be taken for the participants, relatives and colleagues. Opening up and relaying memories of experiences with family and institutions is potentially painful. Having the power to tell one's own story comes with the responsibility towards others as I may venture into their cultural and personal territory (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Ellis, 2007; Tolich, 2010). Ellis (2000) requests consideration as to whether the potential to cause injury to relationships is worth the addition to the narrative. We are dependent on relationships and do not live our lives in isolation. Thus, I deleted parts of the narrative that may possibly cause people to feel implicated in my perception of constraints. The representation of anyone in an unfavourable light is my perception of an experience. I have made an effort to smooth over any issues related to these portrayals by informing family and colleagues who may feel slighted by my mention.

Obtaining ethical clearance from the various institutions of the participants was an easier process. Filling in forms is easier than the sensitive and careful conversations with people I encounter on a daily basis. It is important that the interviewer listens and retells the stories

with respect. Holding the responsibility of anonymity, confidentiality and blurring of participants is my primary ethical consideration. Furthermore, I have been careful of not misrepresenting the participants in order to suit my own narrative. For this reason, I have included quotations from the shredded and secured interview transcripts. Only I know the identity of the participants.

1.9 Key concepts

The importance of defining terminology for this study is so that readers may identify that how I use the terms may be different to other definitions. There is an interplay between my perception of historical events and my descriptions of these, which will differ from one of another culture or background.

Apartheid

The direct translation into English meaning "apart-ness" or legal segregation. This was a legal system where citizens of South Africa were not only kept apart in residential areas, educational and social institutions, but also economic separation depending on the colour of their skin and being African Black or other Black (mixed, Indian and Asian).

Belonging/sense of belonging

Belonging is the notion that others, previously excluded, who inhabit a place, have equal share in a space. Sense of belonging is the notion whereby a person feels equally entitled to the space they inhabit without being "othered". Importantly, everyone should feel that they are perceived as having an equal right to be in a space and share in a growing culture.

Black

This term used in this study for anyone referred to in South Africa as African Black, "coloured", Indian or Asian. Steve Bantu Biko's Black consciousness movement recognised all those not seen as white as Black (Iskander & Rustom, 2010). The term "non-white" is not acceptable. I use this term with respect and acknowledgement that African Black or Bantu (an Apartheid term) suffered more discrimination than others I refer to as Black. The participants in this study include all the groups. We had all grown up with one of these divisive identities forced upon us with the varying levels of discrimination under Apartheid.

Coloured

This term was assigned to mixed race people by the Apartheid regime. There is no "Coloured" nation or tribe. Mixed race people in South Africa can be of single-race, interracial, multiracial, biracial, multi-ethnic and multicultural. There is no such homogenous group.

Culture

The shared practices, symbols, morals, values, beliefs of a group of people who usually feel that they have a common heritage. In South Africa, this word is often linked to race and used to depict racial differences. Dominant culture and dominant discourse refer to the patriarchal system of appreciation of white-male.

Gendered identity

Gendered identity is the socialised awareness of behaviours and expectations of a man or woman irrespective of their own preference. Gender-based discrimination or sexism is carrying assumptions that women, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual people are less than those who identify as men. It is also the assumption that all men are equally sexist.

Institutional micro aggressions

Attitudes and behaviours which exclude anyone who does not fit in and are presumed to be less intelligent are expected to assimilate into the dominant culture. These attitudes can be subtle and detract from the academic project of the marginalised. These are feelings and nuances which are often difficult to describe.

Intersectionality

The point of view from which this thesis analyses is that the ideal is white, financially secure, Christian male. Intersectionality is then the combination and multiplicity of factors that negatively influence an individual's life experiences and chances of access, achievement and success in HEIs. The factors intersect, challenges exacerbate, and rather than add up, each multiplies upon the other. This forms a nexus or knot that may include complexion of skin, disability, economic viability, gender identity, hair texture, language, linguistic proficiency, race, religion and social class.

In addition to being problematic as a Black person and a woman, the Employment Equity Act of 1998 (section 55) (Republic of South Africa, 1998) designates white women, Black men, Black women and disabled as equally previously disadvantaged under Apartheid. This definition disregards disabled Black women. The problem with the view that "all the men

are Black and all the women are white" and *everyone is able* (own addition) had been noted by Crenshaw (1989). Without recognition of how ability, race and gender equity issues play out, specifically against Black women, the task of improving the numbers becomes more arduous.

Racial awareness versus Racism versus Prejudice

Racial awareness is recognising someone as being a certain race while making no negative or positive assumptions or judgements about the person's identity and culture. Racism is thinking that people are not equally human and making judgements based on their darker skin tones.

Racism is more than being prejudiced. It is assuming that people who are not white have certain negative behavioural patterns. It is making assumptions based solely on their darker complexion. Racism is one-way i.e., white on Black prejudice which are both negative and limited. Example: "Black people are mostly lazy" and "Black people have great athletic skill and stamina."

Racialised identity is socially constructed ideas about individuals' behaviour and culture based on their skin colour, Black or white, and other features. We tend to think in terms of "us" and "them" as separate homogenous groups and expect that they will act based on the identity we assign to them.

Reverse racism does not exist

White people may experience negative prejudice. Racism is experiences of discrimination based mostly on skin colour and occurred with colonisation of Africa, Australia, New Zealand and America.

Sense of self

This is a perception of self in relation to others: where one fits in a hierarchy; spaces one feels at home and where one does not; comfort or discomfort in expressing ones' identity.

Transformation

In South Africa's 26 public universities an increasingly diverse (read: Black) cohort of students and academics enter a context from which we had historically been excluded. For most, this is where transformation efforts begin and end. Popular opinion by protectors of the higher academic realm, often including institutional management, is an added hindrance

in addressing the issues as to why so few are able to, or choose to, traverse the pathway in their aspirations to academic positions. The opinion is that many Black women prefer lucrative positions offered in the private sector (University of Cape Town [UCT], 2014).

1.10 Workplace politics for Black women

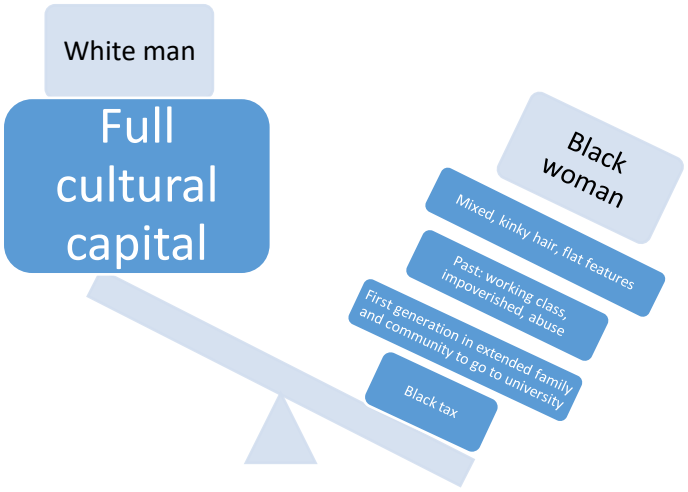


Figure 1.10.1: Unbalanced scale White man versus Black woman – As a woman of colour, I am not a typical graduate at a historically white university. My parents had not completed school, my skin is darker, hair frizzier. I speak up more often than most would like me to and I can be repetitive when my opinion is not heard or dismissed. Standing on an academic platform at one of the most recognised universities in South Africa, a white domain, I can see that there are still too few like me and too many for whom this will always be an unrealised dream.

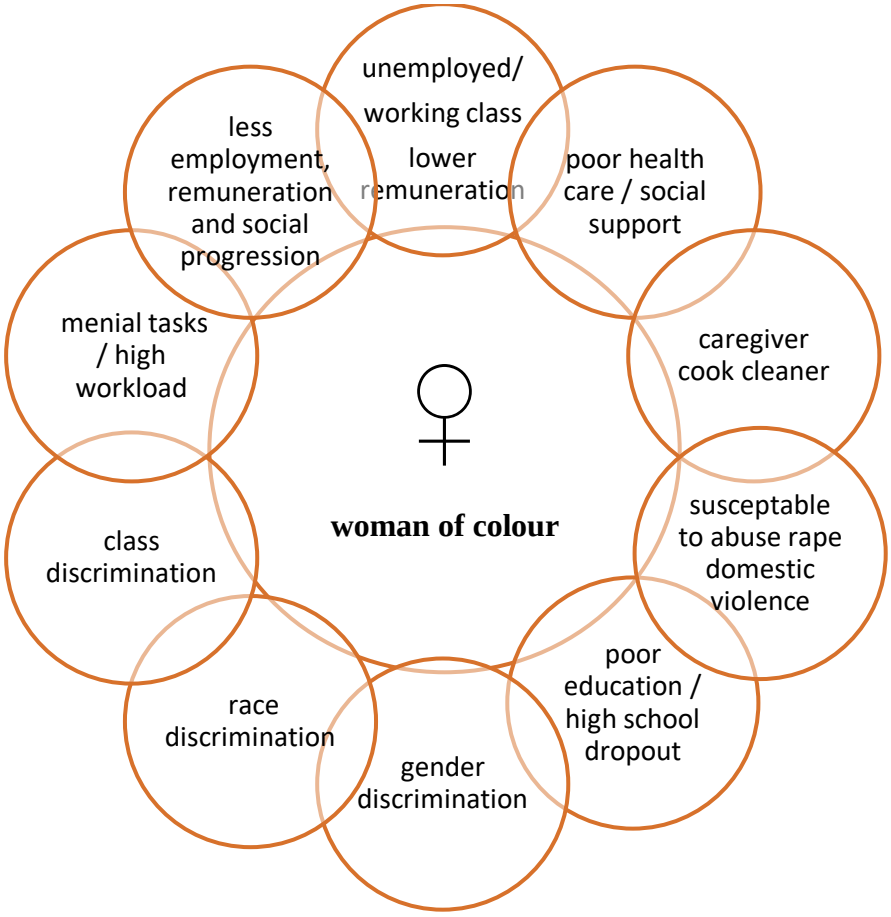


Figure 1.10.2: Intersectional issues for Black women

Educational, cultural and societal inequalities are deliberate political inflictions cast most heavily upon dark-skinned women in order to keep us in positions of dependency and limit our prospects (Mirza, 2009; Pease, 2010; Ndlovu, 2014). The factors affect all races and genders socially and economically, some positively and others negatively. Black children who are left for a full day to fend for themselves have less chance of completing school. White men and women are able to go out to work and study while those children's Black mothers take care of white children (West, 2006). We too had a Black woman take care of our children, but she brought her own child with to work and he spent all day with his mother and our children.

The gaps through which Black girls can escape the cycle of poverty are narrow. Black girls outperform Black boys, scholastically. Black women who enter university show a higher percentage of pass rates than their counterparts do but still we feel and are treated as less worthy and made to feel lazy or stupid. In post-Apartheid South Africa fewer Black women achieve doctorates and top academic positions (Cloete, Mouton & Sheppard, 2015:84).

Increased access of Black women to higher education indicates that more of us are working harder to achieve the same goals as those with fewer constraints.

Research-led institutions are especially slow in transformative processes initiated prior to 1994 as part of the process of ending Apartheid. In 2017, continued structural inequalities exist as time and funding are more available to academics at historically advantaged institutions (research-led) than at historically disadvantaged institutions (teaching-led) (Leibowitz, Bozalek, Farmer, Garraway *et al.*, 2017). Culturally, the notion of past privilege being current privilege is as difficult for white people to acknowledge as it is for Black people to verbalise. One cannot simply say that Black women are entitled to more time for studies when white people refuse to acknowledge their privilege.

Discriminatory practices of the past remain, largely, part of my present world. The system of Apartheid gave white people in South Africa the conviction that only they rightfully belong and that the rest of us are sub-citizens, if not also sub-human. The rest of the citizens are "coloured", Bantu, Black, Indian, "boys" and "girls" (irrespective of our age) meant to be in service. A significant part of the South African context and culture is that certain privileges were (are) withheld from Black people but not from "coloured" and Indian people. These notions transfer and prevail in many domains and many "coloured" and Indian people bought into the idea that our proximity to whiteness makes us better than African Black people. This means that the darker skinned and kinkier haired have more past and current challenges than others. However, acknowledging this, from here on, I use the term "Black" to refer to all people of colour – those of us who are of fully-African descent, mixed-decent of Khoi-Malay-Asian-European and Indian descent.

In addition to being Black, many cultures in South Africa consider women and non-binary persons as having a subordinate position within family and community. Hierarchical societies are often a fight for survival for Black girls. For favour, health and wealth (Coovadia, Jewkes, Barron, Sanders & McIntyre, 2009; Balfour, Moletsane & Karlsson, 2011). They are least considered for favour over boys in inheritance of land as well as positive attention. A girl or woman would marry and go to her husband's property – even become property. Black women are often seen as property of their husbands, masters and mistresses. Black women belonged only as far as we have value as tools and regarded as somewhat disposable (Bailey & Cuomo, 2008; Akala & Divala, 2016).

The background to this thesis is based on the assumption that the stories we have to tell are alternate to the history we were taught. In higher education this culture and context is the important backdrop. Aspirant Black women going "against the grain" are becoming more common; however, the pathway is not as trouble-free as for others. Doctoral studies are challenging even for the privileged in our society. Maodzwa-Taruvinga and Divala's (2014:1961) research focus "argue that women of colour confront the twin edifices of domination and marginalisation arising from the legacies of colonialism and apartheid". Furthermore, as reported in other studies, most Black women rely on "individual agency" to "survive and progress" as academics. The development of this sense of identity comes from a resilience and the ability to identify the necessary enablers. Whether this develops from childhood and/or adult experiences is an interesting consideration.

Often the "problem" of woman of colour in the workplace, in this case HEIs, is that she enters a culture where she has historically been, and is still, marginalised. Conforming to equity policies, white colleagues attempt, but seldom succeed, in getting things right. This is due to people not wanting to acknowledge that Apartheid has created in us an inherent knowing of place. There is thus an inherent racism that exists for anyone who has consciously and unconsciously been taught that Black is inferior. Their notions may be as simple as "Black people do not understand how things are done here". Unless a Black woman is willing to assimilate and not address issues pertaining to her marginality, she causes a space of discomfort. Few recognise that the space she enters is also one of discomfort for her. It is expected that she may experience it but not cause others discomfort by addressing her discomfort.

Below, I illustrate a common scenario as Black women enter a space from which she was previously excluded. This scenario can occur repeatedly each time she enters a new environment.

= Black woman enters an institution, faculty or department where she is historically marginalised

♂♂♂ ♂♂♂♀♀ = how the institution's leadership is most likely to be mirrored in the context

☺ ♂ ♂♂ ♂♂♂♀♀ = initially she may feel welcomed and lucky if slightly ill at ease being the only or one of so few.

However

♂♂♂ ♂♂♂♀♀ / = after a period she realises that there are issues which negatively affect all Black people, all women but certain issues affect only all Black women. These are often

ignored, denied and defended by the institution and the work group and played down by everyone, including other Black women.

♂♂♂ ♂♂♂♀♀ // = when one Black woman points out these issues, one or all of the following three things happen, which further alienates her from her workgroup:

1. She feels that she is the problem and is labelled loud-mouth, trouble-maker, stirrer or, at best, social justice warrior;
2. She raises issues repeatedly before they are addressed, often in a mollifying fashion. This is because few, if any, others have complained before. The workgroup and the institution thus fail to acknowledge that the issues are not isolated and are systemic;
3. She raises further related issues, which are dealt with as side issues until she becomes exasperated and exhausted. She could exit the institution at any of these stages.

Figure 1.10.3: Black woman in organisations (adapted from CoCo / The "Problem" Woman of Colour in NonProfit Organizations w.coco.net.org)

The Black woman may realise that she was a tokenised hire. The repetitiveness of the issues and her addressing them is a repeated injury.

The institution at which I came to do postgraduate studies, and am currently working at, is not my first experience at this Historically Black University (HBU). During the early 1990s I would come here to beg the "coloured" guard at the library to let me in to use books for my honours research. My own HBU did not have the books I needed. Currently the university is still predominantly white despite being set in the winelands where there are many poorer Black communities. Many alumni of this university are infamous historical Afrikaner Apartheid figures and many Apartheid laws were written on its premises.

1.10.1 Burden of proof

Similar to my year-long experience teaching at a whites-only school, when I started here the students did not hide their feelings about me teaching them. At first their disrespect was expressed by a lack of responses to my questions and then inappropriate questions and comments, coming and going as they pleased or arriving drunk after lunchtime. This is often the experience of Black teaching staff at universities (Hughes, 2008a). One white student said that his parents would not understand how I could be teaching him so he would not tell them. He said that such a conversation with his parents would *ruk handuit* (get out of hand). At first, it was difficult for him to respect me as a lecturer. I encountered similar reactions in varying degrees in each of the four faculties in which I taught. During Apartheid it was a criminal offence for Black people to study and teach in white institutions (Lekgotla, 2017). For these students' parents, who had studied here during Apartheid and then retreated to

their farms, the reality of change was not easily imaginable. This is not the only evidence of how slowly the culture changes when the privileged have to give up gate-keeping at our institutions.

Once I had completed my Master's degree, I applied for permanent positions. One position was at a centre where I had worked on a short-term contract basis for over two years and I was doing excellent work. I was not notified that I had not been appointed but instead found out in a workshop I attended when someone else happily revealed that she had just been permanently appointed for that position. She is white. I was shortlisted and interviewed for another post but one day later was informed that I had not been successful. In asking for a reason, I was told that the other candidates were Afrikaans first language. I am able to speak and understand Afrikaans quite fluently but it is not my home language (Carolissen & Kiguwa, 2018b).

The concepts of privilege and disadvantage have little relevance without recognising the role of race and the culture in which it plays out within the context. It is also important to realise, even if not fully understood, that experiences from a Black person's perspective are different. Black women sharing their experiences and perceptions is an important point of departure as this is the basis of understanding. Soudien (2013) says that while conflating numbers of graduates in higher education can be helpful, the picture denies the intricate details of individual experiences and the continuous repercussions of the past. An example of my own experience was the realisation that it may be equally important to acknowledge those people who attempted to act properly as much as what is wrong within the institution.

With the latest figures showing post-Apartheid positions in academia indicating that still not much has changed with the percentage of Black, especially Black women professors. Reasons often put forward are that there are no suitably qualified candidates or that Black women prefer to take up more lucrative positions in the private sectors (Lekgotla, 2017). Poverty and lack of educational resources is generational. Twenty years after the transition to democracy in South Africa, one can recognise the relevance of childhood poverty in the inability to advance in other areas of life, including academia (Isoke, 2013; Uwimbabazi & Lawrence, 2013). When neither Black nor white academics recognise the cultural capital of Blacks, it holds back not only HEIs, but also the country. As long as we continue to write victim narratives of Black women we do not get to the true nature of what is on offer. If the statistics of postgraduate achievement indicate that the gender divide is

being satisfactorily addressed but Black women are still underrepresented in academic positions, it can be deduced that Black women are disfavoured for higher education academic positions. Many Black women are second career and often at more mature age still referred to as early career. Statistical evidence does not highlight the void of Black women in academic positions as an issue because of conflation of "all women" referring to Black and white and then "all Blacks" referring to women and men (Crenshaw, 1989).

There are further reports that lagging institutional racism and sexism is the responsibility of national leadership and institutional management. This view is supported by others (Mabokela, 2000; Breetzke & Hedding, 2016) who state that the higher education institutional climate still needs further transformation before we can see the increase of Black academics.

Our experiences differ and we also have varied perceptions in what we identify as enablers and constraints along our educational trajectories (Malherbe, Kleiwegt & Koen, 2000). Stakeholders in HEIs may not have heightened awareness of the challenges and opportunities for Black women. Teaching, learning and growing up during Apartheid, and in a society which favours men over women and white over Black, means that Black women remain largely ignored. Statistics on success rates and number of academics at various institutions only distinguish between *white* and *Black* and *man* and *woman*. There is scant evidence of the success rates, appointments and experiences of *Black* and *women* academics. Interrogating notions of sense of self, agency and the interplay of the individual Black woman in her educational context, is necessary to understand what her experiences can teach us.

Necessary qualitative studies (Ellis, 2007; Johns & Marlin, 2010) show that, depending on personality as well as other factors, individual experiences of similar circumstances differ. I use this as background to justify that this study starts with the premise that experiences of teaching and learning in higher education also differ from another. These differences include issues such as sense of self/identity, race, gender and belonging. The way these factors affect individuals' interaction within the institutional structural and cultural milieu can either enhance or inhibit relationships and individual growth. Examples from my own work experience are relevant. As a 17-year-old working at a chain store, rather than being dissatisfied, I confronted management when I found out that I was earning less than a white male colleague doing the same work and with the same experience. At my current

institutions, I have not taken kindly to being admonished as one would a child by a senior white colleague from whom I had a lot to learn with regard to her exacting standards. While other Black colleagues found this colleague's manner offensive, no-one had the courage to confront her about it. I felt upset when this happened with me and knew that I could not happily continue working if the issue was not addressed. Although she was a senior colleague, I requested a meeting where I expressed my feelings regarding her handling of the situation. Her response was that no-one else had complained. She did not repeat her behaviour with me and the next time I noticed her doing the same with a junior colleague, I encouraged the colleague to take it up with our management.

1.10.2 Educational research

This study fits within a critical intersectional framework, concentrating on the cultural differences which cause a gender/racial/class divide. I examine the data in order to determine what themes develop to show the influences of structure, culture and sense of agency play in individuals' experiences and perceptions of educational progress. I investigate the various influences which impact negatively or positively on their ability to traverse educational structures and cultures. The ultimate purpose of the study relates to finding ways of increasing the number of Black women in senior academic roles and opening pathways for others. It aims to enhance and create enabling conditions for professional academic development of marginalised groups. Due to the fact that there are significantly low numbers of Black women in these academic positions, this study is also a critique of the structures and cultures of informal and formal education which aids in keeping Black women out of higher education. Furthermore, the study encourages Black women to work towards accessing the institutions while bringing their knowledge to the fore. This study conveys but one of the methods of finding out how the educational experiences of Black women influences their sense of identity. Of equal importance is that institutional management should realise the interplay between the individual and the culture and structure of institutional bodies such as work groups, departments, faculties and management.

It is impossible to connect events we do not consciously recall with what happens later in our lives. The telling of my story in relation to others' is that we have reached a space in higher education by overcoming the obvious similar challenges discrimination has set up

for us. Whether their stories differ or are similar to mine on the basis of class, sense of identity or experience of contexts cannot be shown in statistical data.

Do our past experiences influence what we currently experience working within higher education cultural and structural contexts? Do the current contexts within which we operate, irrespective of our past, ultimately affect the success of Black women's success in academia?

There exists an obvious gap between the purposes of transformation policies and the people that these policies are reaching (Leibowitz, Swartz, Bozalek, Carolissen, Nicholls & Rohleder, 2012; Breetzke & Hedding, 2016). Instead of looking at the problem from a deficit perspective, I have decided to investigate the perceptions from the vantage point of those of us inside the institutions.

The factors influencing the experiences in the interplay between the individual, the culture and the structures, are admittedly intricate. The problems may stem from institutions seeming to offer little recognition for the social and cultural capital of Black women; it may stem from Black women's responses to the enablers and constraints. One example of a complex challenge is assimilation, which bears on issues of belonging, which is not unique to South African people who had historically been marginalised in academia (Mabokela, 2000; Yuval-Davis, 2006; Sue, 2015). To what degree are institutions expecting Black women to assimilate versus the degree to which Black women respond to this demand? While the problem has been investigated in other studies, this study focuses on the entire educational trajectory to identify factors over time, with a specific focus of the interplay of Black women with their formal and informal education. If social and political justice is to be achieved in any context, we need a deeper exploration of culture and identity of institutions and individuals (Vodde & Gallant, 2013; Ndebele, 2014). Continued discontent and dissatisfaction of needs being met must be the reason that Black women academics are not achieving at the rate which is hoped. This is indicative of issues at the level of interplay between the individual and her work context (Eraut, 2000; Van Schalkwyk, Leibowitz, Herman & Farmer, 2015; Hasford, 2016). Institutions and its managements are possibly not being experienced as "care-full" (Herman, 2015) enough by these academics. The details for the "disjuncture" between the wished-for outcome of Black women graduates and their contexts lays in their experiences in institutions. Investigating the interplay between policies, culture and individuals means hearing of their past, tracking their possible and

plausible development of sense of identity and identifying how these affect the interplay in current contexts.

Investigating individual trajectories and the perceived value of their capital in relation to institutional culture and structure will assist in understanding the professional development of Black women in academia. This interplay is important to understand in relation to the generalised statistics. Understanding the role of structural and cultural interplay and the individual may well facilitate improved approaches towards Black women in these environments.

Hegemony is challenged by what is called counter-narratives and this is understandably the cause of much discomfort amongst those dominant groups and those who are converted or assimilated. Employing "new" methodologies to relay narratives of those on the outside destabilises better known frameworks and those who use them. Previously unrecorded knowledge requires a different understanding of "others" than what was previously taught about "them" (Butler, 1993). "Othering" and the expectation that others need to assimilate and not add to or change the dominant culture, is the flawed presumption of a dominant culture. In South Africa, European male-dominated religion, politics and economics still inform the organisation of many of the top institutions of higher education. In order for a shift in institutional culture to happen, differences in teaching and learning of students and academics entering universities must be taken into account (Behari-Leak, 2017). Educational institutions are spaces for knowledge-building as well as addressing inequality and social justice issues.

1.11 Chapter outline

1.11.1 Chapter One

This chapter gives an outline of the thesis and the investigation to follow and the reasons for its necessity towards social justice in South Africa.

1.11.2 Chapter Two

The literature review situates this study in Critical Race and Intersectional Feminist studies in South African higher education.

1.11.3 Chapter Three

I explain concepts used and how they relate to other theoretical frameworks to inform the framework of this study. I investigate how research practices objectify a Western education system and how we can instead work towards creating culturally responsive pedagogy (Stetsenko, 2008). This framework adds lenses so that we may zoom in and out of the realities of Black women academics.

1.11.4 Chapter Four

The methods and methodology chapter presents the relevance of considering the participants regarding the literature on autoethnographic, intersectional and identity studies. It shows how the data collection process can be used to accommodate participants who have different language and educational backgrounds. The analysis of drawings and interviews of the participants and researcher diary of conversations was used to present the data.

1.11.5 Chapter Five

The data analysis gives a brief description of each participant and relates the themes exposed within the case. Comparisons with my own autoethnographic data were analysed throughout the process of writing this research and I compare for similarities and differences in themes, occurrence of sub-themes and outlying data (Denzin, 1997; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Landu, 2014).

1.11.6 Chapter Six

This chapter offers a deeper discussion of the analysis chapter. Few previous studies have offered a comparative study of an assumed homogenous group and the discussion highlights the pertinent issues uncovered in the experiences which are often difficult to explain.

1.11.7 Chapter Seven

The concluding chapter offers the limitations, possibilities for further research and ways in which South African and global institutions may alleviate the burden experienced by Black women in attempts to transform the culture for universities. It is within the contexts of our institutions that we experience the intersectional trials and it is here that we are able to address them towards a transformed and just society.

1.12 Chapter summary

The chapter gave an overview and background of my investment in the thesis. The complex manner that I entered the context of higher education in South Africa led to the research interest and the aims which the study is to achieve is within this limited scope. The research questions present the overarching purpose of the research and binds the following chapters together. The chapter further explained the reasons for employing and adapting the research methodology and design and how the theoretical frameworks are refigured to situate the uncommon phenomenon of Black women in mid to high academic positions. The literature review in Chapter Two, interrogates international and national phenomena researched in the educational trajectories of Black girls and women, especially what influences their achieving mid to senior positions in higher education.

Chapter Two – Review of Literature

The educational experiences of Black women academics

> *I position myself here—now—visiting my past, doing field work, performative living my life as whole. I position myself here—in the academic public space—as an indigenous ethnographer: as a member whose membership is not mine…yet. I position myself here to decolonize inquiry, to decolonize academia.*
>
> *– Claudio Moreira, 2008 (in Tsalach, 2013:71)*

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews global, African and South African research literature around Black women's educational experiences in their educational contexts. Under-representation of Black women in senior positions is a universal phenomenon. Success in postgraduate study is recognised as the gateway to senior positions, and the few Black women who pass this threshold face further challenges in being recognised than their white and male counterparts (Crenshaw, 1989; Mckenna, 2012, 2014b; Cloete *et al.*, 2015). The introduction of the value of education begins within our homes and communities (hooks, 2006, 2008; Mirza, 2009). Family and community attitude to gender, race and class play a vital role in self-identity issues of individuals (Yuval-Davis, 2010; Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011). The influences of these protective spaces are determinant on to how we prepare for fulfilling roles in broader societal domains. The formal educational system is one of the most important domains (Schwartz, Côté & Arnett, 2005; Sindic, 2011). The roles expected or enforced upon us as we progress are either cause for comfort or discomfort depending on how we and others perceive the paths we choose. Making choices between retaining the good and undoing the bad with these assignments requires critical discernment which can be difficult given the power of institutional discourses around race and gender (Essed, 1992; Badat, 2010; Neal-Jackson, 2018). This review includes examining research on pre-primary, primary and secondary education as it impacts our later interplay in HEIs. The literature further focuses on how sense of self and other factors which influence experiences in what is often described as the "ivory tower" of higher education (Nunley, 2009). The research distils from narratives and other research the perceptions Black women present in our institutions as the reasons that there is such an absence.

2.2 The Global, African and South African issue

The international context of universities is the broad academic environment within which teaching, learning and innovative events occur. Education in Africa is a goal researchers and others feel can address the myriad of challenges (Nunley, 2009; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015; Leibowitz, 2016). In sub-Saharan Africa, primary, secondary and tertiary enrolment and retention lag when compared to the rest of the world for a range of reasons (Maddock & Maroun, 2018). In South Africa, the challenging contexts can be spaces for reflection on how institutions can play a part in addressing the issues. Most specifically, in this thesis, the concentration is on the education of Black women. South African universities differ at levels of innovation, technology or preparedness of students, management and lecturers. In South Africa, 12% more women than men obtain undergraduate degrees and 10% more women than men obtain postgraduate degrees (CHE 2015/2016). A common global and national issue is the low number and rate at which Black women attain seniority when they are no less successful at obtaining degrees than white men, white women, and Black men. For transformation around this aspect to occur, the Department of Education (DoE) states that interrogation is needed into the role that economic, historical, and socio-political factors play on Black women who aim to extend their lives beyond educational barriers (Department of Education, 2012). I interrogate the role of interplay between self-identity and the cultural and structural elements of context. I believe it is at this nexus that Black women are either enabled or constrained.

The educational pipeline in South Africa from primary school enrolment to doctoral (Herman, 2011) completion is illustrated below:

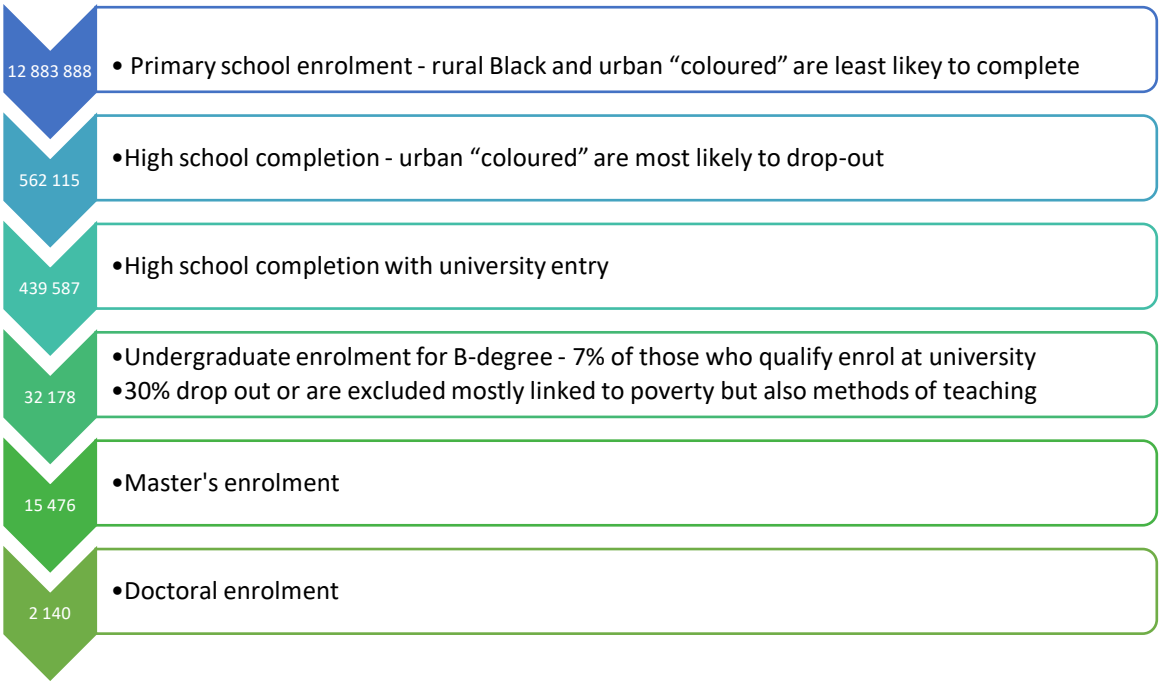


Figure 2.2 Educational pipeline, South Africa

Government resources should be concentrated on improving retention at the level of basic education as this will improve the enrolment at higher levels of education in the long term. However, this does not have to be an either/or scenario because educational success can and should be addressed from multiple angles. Altering the stature of women at senior level education by prioritising gender-racial equity, should result in a downward effect on the culture of learning which supports the basic level of education.

Morrow (2009) states that higher knowledge as "formalised", "discursive", "advanced" and "specialised". Even though HE student numbers in South Africa have doubled with more diversification of race and gender (DHET Report 2016/17), these concepts remain most extraneous to Black women because of the many challenges they faces *en route* to the station of senior roles in academia. The notion of higher education being for the social good, economic accessibility, new knowledge and social mobility and democracy affects Black women most negatively. Irrespective of how prepared and determined Black women are when entering university structural constraints such as rape culture, racism and gender misrecognition, makes universities scary places, physically and professionally.

In the analyses of the patterns of disenfranchised girls and women in South Africa and across the globe, evidence exists that educational and thus social success is diminished directly by the number of negative factors which intersect in their lives (Mirza, 2009; Garcia & Yosso,

2013a; Benjamin, 2014; Ndlovu, 2014). Many of these factors make permanent impacts on their futures, determining who they are to become, how they act and interact. The defenders against the misconception that adding intersectionality to feminism only serves to divide feminist theory as a conspiracy by some women (and some men) leading to tribalism, are correct in stating that intersectionality raises the debates of Black women (Mahmood, 2001; Bailey & Cuomo, 2008). Recognising, through feminism, that there is inequality between genders, directly links to the inequalities created by class, social status and race. The intersections affecting Black girls are how far they are removed from those characteristics which society deems desirable: white (fair in complexion, straight hair, and sharp features); sound financial status; man and woman parent; educated and influential parents; heterosexual. The uppermost of these is being white, irrespective of whether man or woman. This is evidenced in the tables of employment rates where Black, especially women, are least likely to advance.

The continued gender and racial issues makes it an arduous task to resist, but also to address. Day-to-day work as an academic can easily happen in oblivion to the contextually political issues. Political concerns begin to feel less uncomfortable and it becomes convenient to forget that Black women are still anomalies and that they struggle in ways that others do not, for a place of belonging (Essed, 1992; Akala & Divala, 2016; Salem, 2016). A presentation at the Higher Education Learning and Teaching in South Africa (HELTASA conference 2010) conference made me aware of the severity of underrepresentation of Black women in academia. White men dominate and then they choose their closest counterparts, white women, to work alongside them. Since Black men and women entered HEIs worldwide, only a select few reach top positions (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). Increased enrolment of Black undergraduate and postgraduate students over the past three decades is not reflected in access for Black women to academic job opportunities. Access to positions of seniority for Black women remains lagging despite meeting academic standards in tertiary level completion (Winkle-Wagner, 2015).

Global and national statistics from educational and academic institutional reports subsume Black women into categories of “Black” and “women”. This erasure makes it almost impossible to address where “Black women” are under-represented and difficult to problematise who holds what positions (Bamberg & Andrews, 2004; Bailey & Cuomo, 2008; Sue, 2015). Thus, most studies that aim at commenting on white male dominance

tend to only address the fate for white women and Black. Research on institutional context shows that globally Black women remain largely excluded in the top levels of institutions. However, what then often goes unrecorded is that the pathway to this point would also have been fraught with struggle through society and school education (Clandinin, Huber, Huber, Murphy, Orr, Pearce & Steeves, 2006; Mirza, 2009; Anderson, Turner, Heath & Payne, 2016; Neal-Jackson, 2018).

The problems are inherent and evident on a global scale in university contexts, as by example, Cobb-Roberts and Agosto (2011:7): "1% of full professors were Black, 1% Asian, 0.6% Hispanic, and 0.1% American Indian".

The assumption is that reports on "women" and "Black" are equally on the periphery of institutions. Ignoring further differences matters because the hierarchical way in which society is set up, every cause for those considered to be under-represented then benefits white women and Black men at the expense of Black women. Wilson (2016), who writes about organizational behaviour affecting men and women, makes redress of race and gender inequality a non-issue because women make up approximately half of staff numbers. The way in which researchers like Wilson (2016) tackle the issues, does not facilitate redress as it fails to problematise the issues for Black women whose presence or absence remain indistinguishable because of the way the records are presented. The exclusion of Black women in such studies sets the intersectional agenda back rather than facilitating it. The exclusion of the identity of marginalised women is similarly reflected in South African reports on race and gender in our institutions.

2.3 South African contextual focus

The legacy of Apartheid of not prioritising education for people is still relevant to academic success. Poverty keeps Black students out while the majority of white learners who enrol at universities have parents or extended family members who had studied at tertiary level. This significantly increases white students' chances of success as there are both the necessary financial and cultural capital in support (Van Schalkwyk, 2012a; Liccardo & Botsis, 2015; Leibowitz, Bozalek, Farmer, Garraway, Herman, Jawitz, McMillan, Mistri, Ndebele, Nkonki, Quinn, van Schalkwyk, Vorster & Winberg, 2017).

On the African continent the odds, culturally and academically, faced by Black girls are further multiplied due to impoverishment and the continued repercussions of Apartheid education. Black girls literally and figuratively have to cross terrific terrain only to be

offered unequal education. They navigate their path by walking long distances, fighting gender-based discrimination and violence. Black children start on the back foot from pre-primary schooling with extremely low enrolment and attendance. Black boys and adolescents are most prone to violence. This is because men are most violent and most often men make choices to act and retaliate in violent ways (Coovadia *et al.*, 2009; Fataar, 2010; Kruger, 2011). My argument, though, is that Black girls struggle most even though they are unlikely to cause their own endangerment. Primary school enrolment increases to a significant count amongst Black and "coloured" learners as with white learners, but unfortunately, the numbers of Black and "coloured" learners dwindle at the level of Grade 9. Black girls are less likely than boys to have chosen to drop out (Neal-Jackson, 2018). At any level of their educational trajectory, influenced doubly by cultural and Euro-centric religious practices and beliefs of "male-hegemony", Black girls face most danger of neglect, rape and murder (Fanon, 1964; Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010).

Once Black girls become educated women, conditions of impoverishment and gender-based violence still places women at the forefront of harm's way.

2.3.1 Verwoerd's lasting legacy: Apartheid and unequal educational policies

In the year 1966, two seemingly unrelated events occurred within the same context. The one event would have a huge lasting effect on me and all girls of colour. The other, much smaller event, would be a part played in the long struggle for equality:

i. In February, the Apartheid Group Areas Acts became law and the forced removal of "coloured", Muslim, Black and white families from District Six, Western Cape in October (Eddy, 2017).
ii. I was born that October under the majestic Table Mountain amidst the chaos of uprooted and disenfranchised people. Soon I would be moved with thousands of families to the sandy Cape Flats where gangs were formed all around us.

The chaos of the time would continue with direct effect throughout my life. The legacy of Hendrik Verwoerd, who was educated at the university where I now work, is a large part of the reason for the challenges faced in the South African educational system.

The vast majority of Black children from rural and lower socio-economic areas walk between two and five kilometres to get to school. The dangers for children as young as six years vary from crossing terrain that includes national roads, fast-flowing or crocodile-infested rivers and gang-ridden areas. Every day young and adolescent girls and boys are raped and assaulted en route to and at educational institutions (Benjamin & Carolissen,

2015; Eynon, 2017). Understandably, thus, the lowest school completion rates are children from Black and "coloured" communities who remain constrained by poverty. White and Indian learners have a four times greater chance of school completion and attaining higher education (StatSA, 2017). These enablers are linked to continued Apartheid affordances of financial stability and educated parents. Although there has been an escalation in educational access and achievement for Black students, the majority have un(der)educated and poor parents. Black children who complete high school do improve their future family's educational trajectories (Lehohla, 2016). However, unless they complete tertiary education and become economically viable, the chances of wider social benefits of securing financial status are slim. The visible shifts that come with awareness of the importance of completion of secondary schooling are notable in the increase of first-generation students (FGS). Gaining admission to tertiary institutions does not guarantee success. FGS largely find themselves in almost untenable positions. Statistics in South Africa show how inescapable the intersectional link between the factors leading to the high FGS dropout rate and familial social confines can be. For many FGS are the first to have ventured outside of their communities.

2.3.2 Hidden in the statistics

One of South Africa's major causes and effects of poverty is the past deliberate impoverishment of Black people by colonisers and the Apartheid regime's unequal opportunities and education. For many years Black people were forcibly removed from where they lived and then were not allowed to own land in their own country. This is what leads to current high unemployment rates among Black people, making impoverishment almost inescapable. The manner in which the statistics is presented makes it impossible to show the high probability that the majority of previously marginalised who progress to senior management and academic positions, are white women and Black men. This knowledge stems from the fact that higher education, much like other institutions, follow a hierarchy downwards from white men at the top and Black women at the bottom. Other researchers also note this occurrence. "[W]hen discussing race, retention, and higher education, … Black women's stories in particular are lost (Eynon, 2017:167). The white population make up 9% in South Africa yet account for more than 50% of academic and senior management positions and of more than 70% of academic staff with doctoral degrees. Comparative statistics pre- and post-Apartheid show that white women have benefitted most

with regard to employment and seniority. The tables below give an indication of how the numbers are presented.

Undergraduate enrolment	2008	2013
Black	619 106	804 324
White	178 140	171 927
Women	460 651	573 698
Men	348 814	409 988

Table 2.3.1: Undergraduate enrolment

Academic staff	2008	2013
Black	16 400	24 984
White	24 009	26 847
Women	18 833	25 171
Men	22 901	27 397

Table 2.3.2: Academic staff

Academic staff with PhD	2008	2013
Black	1 397	2 665
White	3 817	4 489
Women	1 799	2 823
Men	3 554	4 513

Table 2.3.3: Academic staff with Doctoral degrees

StatsSA (2016) shows that the percentage of undergraduates achieving degrees (more women than men) are as follows:

Black Africans – 57.7%; "coloured" – 57.9%; Indian/Asian – 70.6%; White – 72.6%. Black women out-perform Black men in completion of schooling and tertiary education (ages 20 and up). Despite this increase in achievement amongst Black women, senior staffing figures at institutions show that they remain under-represented (StasSA, 2016). While Divala (2014) suggests that there is a "shifting of the goal posts" for Black women it may be that it is coupled with many other intersectional challenges. The need, as Divala proposes, is to address the junior versus senior positions of Black women in academia as a social justice issue. The tables above (2.3.1, 2.3.2 & 2.3.3) have been adapted from information found in Vital Stats Public Higher Education (StatSA, 2016).

School completion rates and access to tertiary education and educational achievement for all Black children remain particularly low. Black men are most susceptible to being both victims and perpetrators of violent crime. Black girls and women are most susceptible to being innocent victims of violent crime. The data give an indication of the predominance of white children enjoying intergenerational privilege of being part of the appreciated culture.

These are the ways in which societal and educational structures benefit white, and continue to exclude Black, people. The challenge of advancing educational outcomes for all South Africans is that, except for minor shifts, privilege and oppression create patterns of educational (im)mobility. A range of interlinked factors maintains the status.

The South African Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET, 2013) report indicates the following by comparative study of 1996 and 2012 enrolments:

i) an increase in the number of undergraduate, first and second postgraduate degrees;
ii) an increase in the number of Black women, compared to white and Black men and white women, graduated with first degrees;
iii) the total percentage of African, "coloured" and Indian (1996 to 2012) PhD graduates dropped significantly;
iv) the number of white men and women and Black men completing PhDs were more than the number of Black women.

The culture shock can be enormous. Nearly 77% of Black students are FGS and 16% of their parents had not received any schooling at all. For white students 55.2% of their parents have tertiary qualifications. The intergenerational transmission of similar qualifications was achieved by 28% "coloured", 27% Indians and 24% Black Africans. The largest escalation in intergenerational mobility was observed among Black Africans, with 77% of those who completed a post-secondary education having achieved a higher education level than their parents (Lehohla, 2016). According to StatsSA (Lehohla, 2016):

> *... differences in intergenerational mobility have remained significant across population groups. The same families tend to constitute the most educated group from one generation to the next. Economists refer to this as the under-education trap, as some families remain unskilled from one generation to the next.* http://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=9530

The statistics above show that South Africa's historical inequality still influences current educational attainment. Policies and good intentions will not significantly improve the situation for the majority of South Africans. The education ministry should "[look] elsewhere for more potent and durable solutions" (Amuwo, 2004:67).

Tertiary enrolment ratios closely mimic the population (52% women and 48% men). However, race remains the imbalanced cursor, which also thus determines who takes up positions of seniority and power in institutions. The most recent statistics show that of the 25 to 64-year age group (the range within which all the participants in this study falls), 12% of the population have tertiary education. White people constitute 38% of this group yet

they make up only 9% of the national population; 21% of Indian and Asian people have tertiary education make up 3% of the national population; 8% of "coloured" people have tertiary education (10% of the population); and Black people (78% of the population) equal 9% of those with tertiary qualifications. These statistics reflect the pattern of racial, educational and economic inequality in South Africa established by the 1966 policies of educational funding for the different races.

Breakdown of the 12% of the South African population with tertiary qualifications 25–64-year age group		
Race	**National population**	**% with tertiary qualifications**
Black	**78%**	**9%**
"Coloured"	**10%**	**8%**
Indian and Asian	**3%**	**21%**
White	**9%**	**38%**

Table 2.3.4: Tertiary qualification figures, South Africa 25–64-year age group

2.4 Current national data and policies in HEIs

Intersectionality does not seem to be a priority for the 26 public HEIs in South Africa. Everyone who was previously considered as marginalised are considered as equally viable for positions. This reasoning fails to acknowledge that Black women have been most marginalised and ignoring this fact means a continuation of the practices in more subtle ways. These institutions are categorised either as HWUs and research-intensive or HBUs and teaching-intensive. Black universities (HBUs) in South Africa remain under-resourced and the majority of the students come from working-class backgrounds. The structural levels present clear differences in resources, staffing and funding (Portnoi, 2003; Beckmann, 2009). Perceptions of which institutions hold more status and offer better education are reflected in which graduates are more likely to be employed (Carolissen & Bozalek, 2017).

The Council of Higher Education (CHE) (CHE, 2015:2) states that transformation and public accountability are of its core values. Its mission statement should set the standard for all public HEIs in South Africa.

> *The mission of the CHE is to contribute to the development of a transformed, equitable, high quality higher education system capable of responding to the intellectual, ethical and human resource challenges of a democratic society based on social justice principles which operate in a global context.*

The mission statements of the majority of the 26 South African public HEIs all promise to align in their mission statements with the South African constitution of equality, equity, and transformation for the public good. The following are excerpts from three HWUs:

University of Cape Town (UCT)	…strive to transcend the legacy of apartheid in South Africa and to overcome all forms of gender and other oppressive discrimination…
University of Johannesburg (UJ)	…commit our university to transformation and decolonised education…challenge colonial constructs of knowledge, systems and structures…
Stellenbosch University (SU)	…is striving towards a welcoming campus culture…irrespective of origin, ethnicity, language, gender, religious and political conviction, social class, disability or sexual orientation…

Table 2.4.1: Excerpts from mission statements of three HWUs

Post-1994, institutions tout transformation on all the necessary requirements towards equity, yet 25 years later many institutions struggle to meet this agenda. There remain discrepancies between the vision and mission statements and the reality of experiences within the institutions. The disjuncture for Black women is even greater and there is seldom evidence of this in the institutional reports on transformation. The Consortium for Higher Education (CHE), like many institutions, fail to highlight issues of intersectionality by not reporting clearly on gender and race. The method of reporting shows that an institution has since 1994 employed more women and more Black people, but the graphs make no allowance for easily discerning which positions are held by white women, Black men or Black women. The hidden reality is that Black women hold the majority (often over 70%) of administrative and lower scale academic positions. Firstly, white women and secondly, Black men are those reaching to share senior positions with white men as decision-makers in institutions.

As per example, the statistics from one of these institutions is used to explain my point of the difficulty of identifying Black women in the higher education system. I have had to compare multiple tables published on separate pages of this one institution in order to find the following information:

Senior staff	**Women**	**Men**
Academic	32%	68%
*PASS	43%	57%

*Professional, administrative & support staff = PASS

Staff members = 3219	**Academic staff = 1020**	***PASS = 2189**

Women 56%	479 (551=men)	1223 (866=men)
**African (Black) 7%	62	171
"coloured"	136	1065
Indian	30	21
White 52%	755	922
Foreigner	47	10

**it is unclear whether African refers to Black South Africans or African foreign nationals and whether Foreigner refers to Other African/European/American foreigner

Table 2.4.2: Hidden statistics of Black women in institutions

In the above table once calculated in this way it is easier to see that white South Africans who make up 9% of the population, persist as the majority of academic as well as support staff. White men dominate in academic positions while white women dominate in PASS positions and they hold majority of senior positions. However, as in most tables across all other 26 institutions, it is not detailed how many academics, senior academics and senior PASS staff are Black women. The Employment Equity Policy (Stellenbosch University, 2016, para. 1) of the institution from the above table states its objective as:

> *to promote equal opportunity and fair treatment regarding employment by eliminating unfair discrimination and implementing affirmative action measures to redress the disadvantages in employment experienced by designated groups with a view to ensure that they are equitably represented at all occupational levels in the workforce.*

The statistics and specific example above suggest that habits of institutional culture internalised in people are hard to break, despite transformative policy expressions. Once culture has become institutionalised, it is even harder to eradicate. There are a number of studies investigating Black women's experiences of higher education which focus on the history of HEIs compared with the current contexts of institutions (Maylor, 2009; Nunley, 2009; Divala, 2014; Ndlovu, 2014). This thesis augments this body of knowledge by investigating, not only the cultural contexts of the institutions, but also the cultural-educational trajectories which develops the sense of agency of Black women academics. It is assumed that most Black women are first generation academics and thus have seldom had examples to follow that are embedded in personal networks. Hierarchical and cultural forces determine that Black women are mostly last to be considered for academic careers and when they do, are expected to mimic the behaviour of white people and men. This leads to a kind of self-oppression as well as oppression of those you consider to be inferior (Freire & Shor, 1987; hooks, 2008). The notion that we learn patterns of behaviour through mimicry as a basic response is true up to a certain phase. Thereafter we start to criticise and make

decisions to either continue as before or to rebel. Copying behaviours is also a more common reaction when we are in complacency mode, that is, when conditions are in our favour. Furthermore, we expect others to behave as we do or expect them to behave in ways which favour us and the status quo without considering that the feelings of complacency may not be shared. Copying or mimicking others is a denial of the self and does not equal accomplishment, yet this is what is expected in institutions inviting Black academics into the fold. This would not serve decolonising or dismantling the Eurocentric nature of HE in South Africa (Fanon, 1964; Kang'ethe & Chivanga, 2016). The counter actions to the main narrative or the dominant discourse is labelled rebellious, disrespectful, and ungrateful. The person becomes stigmatised. An opposing view is that this is evidence of a type of human agency in practice. If we were to stop learning only at the level of observation, we would not use critical thought to move outside, for example, our parents' thinking. We cannot be limited to other people's notions of what experiences we should write about.

The data shows the headcount for staff status by race and gender but not race/gender. The difficulty I experienced finding data on Black women representation in higher education South Africa shows that studies do not centre on Black women academics. A case in point is in AfricaCheck 2014 where the key facts are noted as:

2 174	The total number of professors in South Africa
534	The number of female professors in South Africa
303	The number of Black professors in South Africa

Source: Department of Higher Education (2012 figures)

Table 2.4.3: Professorships 1, South Africa

And from the same site updated for 2013:

4 073	Number of professors and associate professors in South Africa
708	Number of Black professors and associate professors in South Africa
2 870	Number of white professors and associate professors in South Africa
2 175	Number of professors in South Africa
540	Number of Black professors in South Africa
1 593	Number of white professors in South Africa
552	Number of women professors in South Africa
41	Number of Black South African professors in South Africa

Source: Department of Higher Education (2012 figures updated audited information 2014)

Table 2.4.4: Professorships 2, South Africa

Finally, after much contention in the media during 2015, the breakdown was given as follows:

303	Number of Black professors
260	Number of Black men professors
43	Number of Black women professors
98	Number of "coloured" professors
109	Number of Indian professors
1 643	Number of white professors
21	Race unknown

Source: Department of Higher Education (2012 figures updated audited information 2014)

Table 2.4.5:Updated Professorships 3, South Africa

Once again, the data above do not indicate the number of Black South African women. The data do not distinguish between associate and full professors. Also the numbers are confusing as the source indicates "coloured", Indian and Black as separate but it is uncertain who is counted as Black South Africans in the data. Furthermore, this data includes foreign Black professors from other African countries. All of these problematises any attempt to unmask the true number of Black women in senior positions in South African institutions.

This data does nothing to ease the concerns that research in this area is a challenge. The intersection of complexities at any level is not to be fully understood unless individuals are encouraged to relay personal experiences of the cultures as well as investigate what they bring to these cultures. As a Black woman and an academic in South Africa these issues are problematic in ordinary conversations and an attempt to explain and theorise it as academic research even more so. Qualitative data collection on similar previous educational research of Black girls and women have mostly been concerned with either past or present childhood learning experiences or current institutional learning and teaching experiences. This research, though more complex, potentially leads to more thorough processes. I see it as crossing the childhood and current contexts to investigate the development of sense of self and its role in the interplay of the participants and their educational experiences.

2.5 Subjugation

The relevance to this study of understanding the history of South Africa is to understand some part of the psychological make-up of the people of this country. It is not the same as the African-American epic (equally sad, but different) and therefore, while much of the literature referred to is from international sources, the South African context is vastly different.

From the time the white settlers landed in the Cape, they started taking over land as though no-one was living here and it was free for the taking. While many indigenous people did not claim land as done by the settlers, they were fully dependent on its cyclical provision of their needs and most African tribes lived without greed which preserved much of the natural habitat (Khan, 1990). From 1652 to 1800s, these settlers started killing the San people *en masse* because the San were "stealing" cattle which the white settlers had claimed and barricaded as their own (Coovadia *et al.,* 2009).

The few San people who were left were coerced into selling out other Black tribes who lived further inland and Black people, in their fear, gave up the fight and were seemingly "tamed" into subjugation. These are my people. I am San. I am Zulu. I am mixed-race. It could not be proven from any history books written by white historians, but I have heard stories being told.

> *The country's infrastructure was moulded by the violent subjugation of indigenous people, appropriation of their land and resources, and the use of unjust laws, to force Black people to work for low wages to generate wealth for the white minority. South Africa is also a country of political resistance; after 82 years, the organised multiracial struggle against unjust rule finally won democracy in 1994, along with a constitution that establishes the foundation for democratic institutions and upholds wide-ranging human rights.* (Coovadia *et al.,* 2009)

> *What is the use of teaching the Bantu child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice? That is quite absurd. Education must train people in accordance with their opportunities in life, according to the sphere in which they live.*
>
> *– Hendrik Verwoerd 1901 - 1966 (Architect of Apartheid and Minister of Native Affairs)*

Black women remain both culturally and structurally deprived with the least opportunities to thrive (Akala & Divala, 2016). The notion that Black people were less has not changed in the attitudes of white and Black alike. Gender prejudice against women adds to the issue of Blackness, making Black women most deprived and often considered to be of lower intellect, morals and feelings (Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010; Villar & Albertín, 2010; Essed & Schwab, 2012). While few acknowledge that this is a lasting view of Black people and women, many attitudes have not changed since the 1800s (West, 1995). Attitudes are difficult to shift when supported by institutions that have academic and top administrative staff comprising of 70% white while over 90% of service or cleaning staff are Black

(Mabokela, 2000; Malherbe *et al.*, 2000). Younger generations may not openly express this belief but the distortion of perceptions and expectations are encouraged when Black women are mostly seen in the lowly places in an unequal society (Haslanger, 2000; Johnson, Lee & Green, 2000; Pittman, 2010; Akala & Divala, 2016).

> *Women, poor women of both races, are particularly demonised. The authors write: 'going on welfare really is a dumb idea, and that is why women who are low in cognitive ability end up there' (Herrnstein and Murray 1994: 201). In their analysis unwed mothers are the root cause of everything that plagues the nation. (Mirza, 2009:48)*

The education system in South Africa, was governed by the regime but managed as separate education departments – known as Department of Education for white learners, Department of "coloured" Affairs and Department of Bantu (Native) Affairs (Soudien, 2010, 2013). Funding was provided on a sliding scale. The system of financing education was designed not only to white success and Black failure (Leibowitz *et al.*, 2012) but also to place all other races in the service of whites. The sliding scale of educational funding for white, Asian and Indian followed by "coloured" children above the "Bantu" have lasting consequences on the population.

Government spending on schooling for South African children per annum (1982):

R1211	R771	R498	R146
White child	Indian child	"coloured" Child	Black Child

The **impact of this past unequal funding on the current schooling cohort** can be seen in the 2004 primary school cohort in the Western Cape.
Learners' **ability to read** at the right level for their grade:

White 80%	"coloured" under 50%	Black 4%

Current **school exit pass rates** at three schools in the same region:

White 99%	"coloured" 70%	Black 50%

School exit pass with **university entrance** at three schools in the same region:

White 90%	"coloured" 40%	Black 25%

(Republic of South Africa. 2011. Youth View Fact Sheet. Unequal Schools Unequal Outcomes - adapted)

Figure 2.5.1: School funding and outcomes

By grade 12, 80% of white learners exit successfully, while only 41% of Black learners do (Soudien, 2013). Apartheid "residuals" has an immense impact on the success rates of Black people in academia (Badat, 2010; Liccardo & Botsis, 2015; Kang'ethe & Chivanga, 2016). This is not due only to their lacking a sense of belonging and valuable cultural capital but also to white people's ignorance of their many unrecognised or taken for granted enablers. The gaps caused by the "residuals" which Kang'ethe and Chivanga speak of, are not easily recognisable without conscious reflection on the part of everyone in educational institutions. Black women's perceptions of their historical past as disadvantaged people and the role it plays in their present is pivotal to realising that sense of identity plays directly into positionality (Riach, 2017).

In 2017, 80% of South Africa's wealth, including land, remains in the possession of white people (Cole, 2017). The level of education for Black and white students is always linked to quality which is linked to funding. Economic factors, if not specifically race, keep white and Black achievement separate (hooks, 2008; Lewis & Hendricks, 2017). Limited economic resources have been skilfully used by colonial governments to keep many Black students from completion of their studies and being competitors in the global market (Badat, 2010; Lugones, 2010).

> *From gutter schools and bush universities and negative micro-messaging the "yearning for knowledge has always been there [as] early as 1787, Black people petitioned" for it. (Angela Davis, 2002:71)*

Besides disproportionate spending on education for Black children, there were also other less obvious ways of devaluing Black children (Fataar, 2010). For example, as a nine-year old I asked my mother why there were pedestrian crossings only outside white schools.

Less obvious was that health care for different races was also unequally supplied. Few publications address the reasons that Black communities still struggle with disease.

> *I am not against the provision of the necessary medical assistance to "coloured" and natives, because, unless they receive that medical aid (sic), they become a source of danger to the European community. (P.W. Botha – Apartheid Prime Minister (1978 – 1984) and President (1984 – 1989) of South Africa) – Boddy-Evans, 2021, para. 11.*

The "necessary" medical care received by many "coloured" children was vaccinations against tuberculosis. The Children in South Africa were selectively immunised at their

schools or community clinics against life-threatening diseases – Rubella (German measles), Tuberculosis (TB) and Poliomyelitis (Polio). A lesser known fact was how the roll-out of theses vaccines was controlled to benefit white people. White children, specifically, were immunised against Rubella, a disease, when contracted could potentially affect fertility. They also received vaccines against Tuberculosis (TB) and Polio, preventing death which occurred by the thousands in Black communities. Black and "coloured" children received health care vaccinations (TB and maybe Polio) only in so far as it benefitted white citizens with whom they came into contact. The South African National Tuberculosis Association (SANTA) recognizes that Apartheid played a major role in the spread of this epidemic amongst the Black population. The Western Cape had/has the largest white population in South Africa and "coloured" were their preferred employees. As potential maids, nannies and wet-nurses "coloured" girls were immunised against TB to avoid the risk of infecting our future white charges. This account is backed up in ((Visser, Moore, Whiteman, Lowman & Kantor, 2011) in their overview of the history of health care in South Africa. They state that the six major vaccine-preventable diseases only reached the larger population after 1995. Under Apartheid, South Africa had one of the highest global child mortality rates. A direct impact of the unequal provision of health services, TB remains an epidemic amongst the poor in Black communities, further reducing the survival rates of HIV positive individuals. During the 1970s, the doctor to population ratio in Bantustans was 1:15 000 while in white-urban areas it was 1:1 700.

> *The roots of a [current] dysfunctional health system and the collision of the epidemics of communicable and non-communicable diseases in South Africa can be found in policies from periods of the country's history, from colonial subjugation, apartheid dispossession… (Coovadia et al., 2009)*

During the Apartheid period, the approximately 8% white population "consumed 97% of the health budget." Not only did poverty and gender-based violence keep Black girls out of school achievement, but preventable diseases also added to these constraints. The quote by Heath (in Freire & Shor, 1987) mirrors the intention of the Apartheid government through their educational structures in South Africa. Freire and Shor (1987, p 36) express vehemently that "the main task for systematic education is to reproduce the dominant ideology". The "second task of denouncing and working *against* the reproduction of dominant ideology" is the work of "the educator whose dream is for liberation".

2.6 Basic education, health and wealth

> *Early in the century, the millowners had planned schools as places which preached the culture of the townspeople to make millworkers docile and receptive. Through several decades, each new generation replaced its parents in the mill, in spite of increased schooling.... The school is not a neutral objective arena; it is an institution which has the goal of changing people's values, skills, and knowledge bases.*
>
> – Shirley Brice Heath, Ways With Words (in Freire & Shor, 1987)

Poor education linked to economic poverty is a constraint from which few communities can ever recover. Similar problems for poorer, mostly Black, communities exist globally (Solórzano and Yosso, 2002; Yosso, 2005; Mirza, 2009). The proximity of Black students from amenities, public transport and better schools, was paramount to limiting success of a promising future especially for Black girls (Leibowitz *et al.*, 2012; Leibowitz & Bozalek, 2015; Akala & Divala, 2016; Neal-Jackson, 2018).). Many teachers of Black children during Apartheid were adamant that they would help us structure better lives for ourselves within the limits of the separatist educational systems (Mngoma, 1997; Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010; Uma & Walter, 2013).

Communities are made up of families and families of individuals. There is worldwide evidence that the number of disenfranchised Black or Aboriginal children will not achieve the dreams of their white non-native counterparts (Pease, 2010; Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011; de Oliveira Andreotti, Stein, Ahenakew & Hunt, 2015). Even if white children start out equally poor, they have the privilege of being perceived favourably based on the colour of their skin; just as men are perceived as more competent based on their gender. “Profiling” people for competence or lack thereof is a major constraint in building capacity for diversity, for individuals as well as for institutions (Essed & Schwab, 2012; Carolissen & Bozalek, 2017).

Education is never an unbiased, apolitical exercise and happens within a socio-political system (Opfer & Pedder, 2011; Cloete *et al.*, 2015). State education in South Africa was never aimed at an equitable outcome for the different races and there was a flagrancy amongst whites about the reasoning behind the structures for maintaining social statuses (Dill & Zambrana, 2009:185-187; hooks, 2000). Education with this kind of systemic approach can be one of the most of insidious and successful means of having people learn their place in society (Fataar, 2010; Garcia & Yosso, 2013; Neal-Jackson, 2018).

Often language and the ability to access academic literacy is (incorrectly) related to mother-tongue proficiency (Carolissen, 2016). English was/is considered a status language as well as an academic language. The acquisition of English is deemed important for the upward mobility many "coloured" and Black parents desire for their children. This is the reason many parents give as the reason that while they speak Afrikaans or isiXhosa at home and in the communities, their children are enrolled as English First Language classes for formal schooling. The increase in the number of Black enrolment at ex-Model C schools (previously for whites only) as soon as parents have access to such communities is testament to this (Cooper, 2015). Linguistic proficiency, not necessarily language of learning, is an integral part of acquisition of the academic literacy required for adapting to learning. Parental influence and involvement in social and educational learning are enablers for academic success (Mngoma, 1997; Farmer, 2009). Due to the continued educational constraints of Apartheid, inequality for Blacks, few families have access to time, money, a culture and the amenities which enable ideal learning conditions for children.

The low throughput rate at under-resourced schools in lower socio-economic communities is often caused by basic needs for many poor children not being met (Soudien, 2013). Add to that factors such as the value placed on financial and social which further negatively impact one's sense of self-worth, sense of identity (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Yosso, 2005; Leibowitz, 2009). When energy is needed for survival, to secure food, shelter and safety, learning becomes a secondary concern and this is a cycle which usually continues from one generation to the next (Mirza, 2009). The schooling of Black girls has been an important topic towards Black liberation (hooks, 1994; Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010). The highest dropout rate in schools amongst communities of low socio-economic status are girls, due to lack of social esteem, funding, motivation and pregnancy (Mirza, 2009; Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Eynon, 2017). These are the reasons that a small percentage of Black high school graduates receive education further than basic education and those who do, find the transition challenging (Muthukrishna, 2008; Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010; Republic of South Africa, 2011; Soudien, 2013; Ndlovu, 2014). In South Africa, as elsewhere, the intersection of other factors with race further problematises success in higher education (Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Maodzwa-Taruvinga & Divala, 2014; Ndlovu, 2014).

Getting Black girls through twelve years of basic schooling unharmed is a major feat, but once achieved, tertiary level education offers its own set of academic, economic and social challenges where not much has changed over the decades (Evans-Winters, Esposito &

Esposito, 2010; Akala & Divala, 2016; Neal-Jackson, 2018). Empowerment is a hard won victory for those who were essentially born without a promising future (Rappapor, 1995; Brown, 2000). Separation of Black and white children became part of what was accepted as everyday (Essed, 1992; Davids, 2012; Akala & Divala, 2016). The success and lasting imprint of the Apartheid government's dominant ideology, as seen in the quote below, is evident in the vast numbers of poorly educated and compliant Black parents. This is the stem of the high numbers of under-educated and unemployed Black youth in our country.

> *So prescriptive was this system, abetted on the one hand by a network of inspectors and subject advisors and on the other by several generations of poorly qualified teachers, that authoritarianism, rote learning, and corporal punishment were the rule. These conditions were exacerbated in the impoverished environments of schools for children of colo[u]r…procedures were instrumental in promoting the political perspectives of those in power and allowed teachers very little latitude to determine standards or to interpret the work of their students. (Mazurek, Winzer & Majorek, 2000)*

Universities outsource these services so that they would not have to bear some cost of subsidising unionised workers (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006; Tedrow & Obakeng, 2007; Langa, 2017). In South Africa the 2015– 2017 student protests were to challenge the slow pace of change towards equity in education and many of the leading voices have been Black women (Pillay, 2015; Langa, 2017; Carolissen & Kiguwa, 2018b).

Part of "liberation" is being aware of what happens as a matter of routine which we accept in our everyday interactions (Freire & Shor, 1987a; Iskander & Rustom, 2010). Disruption of status quo cannot take place unless there is an awareness of what needs to be challenged and why. The task of the educator in low socio-economic schools is hindered by the fact that their charges' physiological and psychological needs not being met due to enforced poverty and neglect by government and authorities. Gratefully few white teachers taught in Black schools which spared further indoctrination. Often those white teachers who did take up positions in Black schools, like Brenda Leibowitz, were mobilising bodies towards the anti-Apartheid struggle. A number of teachers secretly countered the government by teaching additional socio-dynamics of Apartheid and inequality (Pinar, 2015:11; Gillborn, 2002:20). Education is one of the institutions that re-inscribes dominant traditions as the status quo but it can also be the space from which disruption occurs (Fataar, 2010; Republic of South Africa, 2011; Garcia & Yosso, 2013) and where abilities are honed which would not otherwise happen for Black children (Mngoma, 1997). Boys and girls during the

Apartheid struggle were seldom seen as separate in leadership roles and the combined struggle saw the neglect of what other dangers Black girls faced. Freedom for all was on the agenda by all but in the end men are better remembered and benefited more educationally, economically and socially (Pratt-Clarke, 2010). Black women and girls continued to suffer violence and sexism at the hands of Black men (Pease, 2010).

Showing low socio-emotional esteem and low academic performance can be the result of being bullied or feeling constantly threatened either physically, emotionally or economically (Kruger, 2011; Soudien, 2013). Black women live with constant caution of losing their lives in domestic partnerships and communities or losing their livelihoods at the decision of the white master (Fanon, 1986; Kang'ethe & Chivanga, 2016). Constant physical, verbal and emotional threats towards Black girls must have a profound effect on who learns and who does not (Coovadia *et al.*, 2009; Lugones, 2010; Henkeman, 2016a, 2016b).

2.7 Black women's student identity

Similarities and differences amongst Black women's experiences and perceptions of education occur. American slavery, Australian and European colonisation have impacted heavily on continued perceptions of Black women as maids, cleaners and, at best, care-givers (Lather, 2013; Lugones, 2014; Riach, 2017).

Reforming or transforming higher education becomes the slow-paced management of racial integration. Black people are required to assimilate, in a rational manner, a few at a time, to normalise the integration, so as not to shock the system (Yosso, 2005; Soudien, 2013; Tsalach, 2013; Riach, 2017a). Yet, little of the experiences and concerns are shared between white and Black students (Ross, 2009; Pillay, 2015; Carolissen & Bozalek, 2017).

The table below adapted from (Leibowitz *et al.*, 2012) shows the disparities between what Black students and white students are concerned about in their communities:

Historically Black University (98% Black students)	**Historically White University (80% white students)**
• **poverty and squatters**	• **unhealthy pollution**
• **shebeens/drunk people**	• **church services are old fashioned**
• **dangerous crossing major highways**	• **cliques (excludes some)**
• **insufficient playing spaces for children**	• **high walls breed isolation**
• **no running water**	• **want purified water**
• **police not responsive to citizens**	• **too little sense of security**

• **teenage pregnancies/prostitution**	• **schools focus on rugby**
• **gangs and gangsters**	• **river needs to be cleaned up**
• **facilities long distances from home**	• **vacant sports field is dangerous**
• **fires spread in townships/students easily lose everything**	• **pesticides on crops**
• **housing too dense**	
• **no available library books**	

Table 2.7.1: Disparities between Black and white students' home communities

Access to university is "an active hard-won choice" where students and parents sacrifice hugely to make it possible (Mcmillan, 2012:12, 14). It is an emotional event when children access, study, and then either fail or graduate. Most Black students enter university as first generation students and are considered "at risk" especially after their first assessment (Van Schalkwyk, 2012a). Besides this, having the confidence, the agency and the knowledge that resources exist to access support, are skills students often lack or are too shy to access at predominantly white institutions (Leibowitz, 2009; Lewin & Mawoyo, 2014).

The issues which have plagued higher education transformation internationally and nationally for decades still remain critical (Amuwo, 2004; Stetsenko, 2008; Badat, 2010). Limited access to Black students due to poverty, poor education, proximity are all interlinked (Cooper, 2015). Access to education, especially tertiary, is unaffordable for working-class children. This was one of the major concerns leading up to the most recent 2015–2017 student protest in higher education (Tedrow & Obakeng, 2007; Langa, 2017). Continued unfair practices by HWU are sometimes brazen and sometimes hidden; either way it is always the poorer and Black people who are disadvantaged. Gaining access without support to succeed is a waste of time and finances. Almost 100% of the low-wage service workers are Black women while those benefitting in already top positions are white and male (Mngoma, 1997; Ivancevich & Matteson, 1999).

Black women students in higher education and professional positions have been vocal for many years (Crenshaw, 1989; Pease, 2010; Breetzke & Hedding, 2016), however, their listeners are selective and select. Not only do Black women lack recognition for their leadership qualities, they are often deliberately overlooked for these roles despite having shown their potential in the fight for equity (Nunley, 2009; Hernandez *et al.*, 2015; Langa, 2017). Mohope (2014:1990) suggests that "no urgency was given to the academic advancement of Black women and their completion of doctoral studies" or taking up power positions. Mentors play a central role in support of Black women to gain confidence and meet their challenges (Ndlovu, 2014). Black women are least likely to find mentors in HEIs

which plays a significant role in academic success (Collins, 2000; Van Schalkwyk, 2012b; Cloete *et al.*, 2015).

Black women have long been considered and expected to act sub-something: subjected, subservient, sub-cultured, sub-gender. Women from the African diaspora and those sympathetic to our struggles have started telling stories and have raised acknowledgement of the enforced silence (Butler, 2005; hooks, 2006; Mirza, 2009). These women opened a space for expression of our realities and developing theories to be used and adapted in even more silenced areas of Black women in social, education and other sciences such as health sciences (Naicker, 2008; Stephens, 2011). The challenge for South African Black academics lies in Mirza's (2009) findings that even substandard education, often afforded Black women, can be forged to empower ourselves and others:

> *Challenging the existing and popular explanation of positive motivation that is subcultural identity, I argue instead that young Black women engage in a dynamic rationalisation of the education system. My findings show that young Black women strategically employ every means at their disposal in the educational system and classroom in order to negotiate the institutional practices and overcome the limited resources that shape their educational opportunities. (Mirza, 2009:17)*

Black women students on our campuses are almost always in survival mode and are deflected from identifying, much less refining, any academic strengths or other talents (Cooper, 2015; Akala & Divala, 2016). The burden of proof lays heavily upon us as Black women while it should actually be upon those who act to counter gender-based violence, micro-aggressions and equitable opportunities (Mahmood, 2001:227; Bailey & Cuomo, 2008; Eynon, 2017:210). The status of the hierarchy remains intact as it is easier for the privileged to gain access to domains for which they have had preparation (Divala, 2014; Ndlovu, 2014), while those who are out to achieve goals not set out for them, have a perpetually harder time (Mngoma, 1997; Lugones, 2014).

Schwartz *et al.* (2005) refer to "default individualization" as opposed to "developmental individualization". This is the difference between people who follow a life as is expected of culture or community or those who chose a deliberately considered pathway. For many Black women it takes much more effort to succeed than for their white and male counterparts. Dealing with menstruation while poor (Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010), to get up early and travel to university when living far, are all constraints to overcome before staying on as an academic (Boler, Leibowitz & Carolissen, 2013). The additional support or sense

of identity to achieve the desire for education sped up the urgency to escape the cycle (Ndlovu, 2014; McKenna, 2016). Still dreams of Black girls, being the most vulnerable, are most easily deferred or thrown off track (Boler *et al.*, 2013; Benjamin & Carolissen, 2015).

Overcoming societal or structural obstacles threatening to impede success needs a certain inner strength or other socio-educational backing (Van Schalkwyk, 2012a; Lewin & Mawoyo, 2014; Winkle-Wagner, 2015). Schwartz *et al.* (2005:207) refer to "a sense of responsibility for one's own life course, the belief that one is in control…and the confidence that one will be able to overcome obstacles that impede one's progress". Before this happens, though, there is already a vision of what one wants to achieve, a future identity one has in mind. Few Black women academics set out to professions in academia. Many got to positions despite being undermined, mistrusted and dissuaded (Divala, 2014; Maodzwa-Taruvinga & Divala, 2014).

Reflection brings about awareness of how we came to acquire our positions (Mahmood, 2001; Given, 2012; Salem, 2016). A recalled interplay of past experiences influences how we relate to current contexts or events (Stevenson & Clegg, 2012; Leibowitz, Garraway & Farmer, 2015a). Depending on our positive or negative memories of the outcome, we react positively or negatively to what happens in the present (Butler, 2004, 2005). Although no definitive research of poor Black girls to successful Black woman has been done, Mirza (2009) says "educational desire" of Black girls requires personal agency to be the leading factor for this dream to become reality. This is what makes it possible for some from the "underclass" to achieve university degrees despite their lower socio-economic status (Schwartz *et al.*, 2005; Villar & Albertín, 2010).

Although the aim of Apartheid instilled white supremacy in the South African nation, in some cases it under-estimated the power of dreams of Black girls and their families. The strength of the extended family is mentioned by Ladson-Billings and Tate (2006:9) in reference to the New Orleans Black families' tragic experiences after Hurricane Katrina. It is also referred to often about traditional Black families in South Africa (Keane, Khupe & Muza, 2016).

For a society wishing for change and creating a new social reality for all involved (Bamberg & Andrews, 2004:357), what has not been shared can cause destructible discord. Entering an institution with a deliberate structural and cultural discourse of inclusion and exclusion forces one to critically reflect when you are the one designed for exclusion. Being from an

outside culture forces identity as a "critical social theorist" as the feeling of "not belonging" which resurfaces over time. Human beings are also complicit in playing roles set out for them by the dominant discourses. Unless acknowledged and acted upon to change, we are "implicated in a social temporality that exceeds its own capacities for narration". Until a new narrative enters the fray, either by going in the opposite direction of "the norm" or stepping into what is considered the others' territory, contexts remain unchallenged.

This "stepping out of the lane" may not be abrupt. There is often a process in "being different" which may have started without witnesses or obviously marked events. The order of things is upset when the minority[3] unexpectedly changes course or "spatio-temporal territory" in order to pursue her major project (Bamberg & Andrews, 2004; Stevenson & Clegg, 2012). The way it is done or the expectations may seem radical, especially if the domain in which it happens exists in a culturally exclusionary bubble. The narrative brings knowledge and experience from the outside in, an attempt to bring about "geographically" "responsive" education which is "open to newer actors" (Clegg, 2016).

In order to change the narrative and break from social constraints which do not serve us equally, agency is required. Butler, cited in Bailey and Cuomo (2008), stresses such a point about gender identity – stating that it is a *stylised repetition of acts* meaning that we form habits from what we are taught or by imitating others. She further says that this means that these repetitions can be changed for other repetitions to form new ways of doing things, such as acting differently to others in our society.

The challenges faced by Black women students transitioning to becoming employed academics at HEIs seem unchanged globally, as in South African society. The longed for transformation misses the mark for Black intersectional issues which seem to remain almost stoic (Amuwo, 2004; Badat, 2010). For various reasons, in a gendered and racist society, too few Black women graduates are moving up the rungs of the academic ladder to postgraduate positions (Mirza, 2008; Maylor, 2009; Msimanga, 2014). In our aim of traversing the spaces between structural, social and cultural influences on attaining higher education, we are moving one at a time instead of trampling a pathway for anyone to follow. All the issues Black women and girls have suffered in the past, are replicated in the present.

[3] Minority in political terms is usually understood as being part of a smaller percentage of people, as Black people are in the United States or the United Kingdom. In South Africa, however, Black people are the majority, but a minority in the upper structures of economic power and academic status.

2.8 Assimilation, belonging and complicity

> *You think your pain and your heartbreak are unprecedented in the history of the world, but then you read. It was books that taught me that the things that tormented me most were the very things that connected me with all the people who were alive, or had ever been alive* – *James Baldwin*

The "special permission" Black, Indian and "coloured" students required to study at HWU would have influenced their sense of belonging and assimilation (O'Farrell & Farrell, 2013). These were only a handful of students who obtained permits to study courses which were not offered at the "bush" institutions. Gaining access to these institutions became a badge of honour for many Black students. Their parents who would scrutinise the courses offered at the various institutions and ensure that the course or modules applied for were not offered at the "bush" university. Kiguwa (2014:256) speaks of "a sense of strategic agency and freedom to act that arises precisely from this sense of 'in-betweenity'". Not fully belonging because of understanding the culture and understanding the need to speak in a certain manner does not equal the notion that change is not needed.

2.9 Conformation equals confirmation

The need to conform as students shared class, politics and culture at institutions places a significant burden on the Black woman student (Bailey & Cuomo, 2008; Leibowitz *et al.*, 2012). She should be intelligent in "white ways" and be tough in "male ways", while at the same time trying to balance that she does not seem to be "too much" (Blalock & Akehi, 2017; Farmer, 2018). This discomfort is an added burden to studying which most white and male students need not bear in order to succeed (Mckenna, 2012a; Bozalek, Leibowitz, Carolissen & Boler, 2013; Cloete *et al.*, 2015). Apartheid education has been linked to race and supremacy, influencing language, interactions and dominant discourse as one tries to fit in (Fanon, 1986; Essed, 1992; Pillay, 2015). Soudien (2013) says that the South African political past has caused "deep scarring of the psycho-social make-up of South Africa". The prime intention was to "subvert the legitimacy of African knowledges, on the one hand, and regulate access into European modernity" (Soudien, 2013:57).

> *It [laws of Apartheid oppression] effectively, however, set out to subvert the legitimacy of African knowledges, on the one hand, and regulate access into European modernity, on the other, making opportunities for Black people inferior to those made available to whites. (Soudien, 2013)*

Undermining Black and feminist culture and physical appearance is still pervasive. Black women can become complicit or acquiescent in these practices either for ease for self or thinking that Eurocentric practices are better (Butler, 2004; Bailey & Cuomo, 2008; Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010; Sue, 2011). Notions of white supremacy set out to undermine African and Eastern knowledge and behaviours as deficit and defunct (Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010; DeLeon, 2010; Keane *et al.*, 2016). Race registers as sameness, difference and how we react to or think of people in our physical or literary presence with the foremost awareness being of "the other". Every domain has a dominant culture which inevitably means that others are marginalised and are positioned in the hierarchy (Van Schalkwyk *et al.*, 2015; Hasford, 2016). Research-led (white) and teaching-led (Black) institutions in South Africa have these set-ups both inter- and intra-institutionally (Gasperi, Lucas, Moilleron, Varrault, Mouchel & Chebbo, 2012; Holt, 2012).

Citizenship is an essential element in belonging as a person and a culture (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Enforced carrying of *dompasses* (real or imagined), a burden of proof, imposed on Black South Africans, that citizenship has to be earned in their ancestral country. Apartheid law determined to take away any sense of belonging from the indigenous people, not even allowing Blacks to own land in South Africa.

2.10 What the literature reflects

This chapter deals with literature which displays the considerations of intersectionality of race and gender pertaining to education. Much of the literature deals with phases of access to, and experiences in, education of Black girls or women (Salem, 2016). While some literature deals with all of the issues in separate sections (Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010; Evans-winters & Esposito, 2010; Akala & Divala, 2016; Neal-Jackson, 2018), few articles or books concentrate on the narratives of individuals throughout educational and academic careers. It is impossible to take all of the issues or intersections into account, but it is important to investigate chronological development of individuals in a particular society.

i) Schooling: Pre-school years; primary school; high school.
ii) University: Undergraduate; first and second postgraduate.
iii) Academic career and doctoral studies.

These factors mean that in order to uplift such societies, concentrating efforts towards equity in society should be at this lowest level. Economic position, level of education, class and gender have unequal but reciprocal effects on the other. For Black university graduates,

intersections of race and gender are arguably the most influential obstructive factors on the prospects and experiences in pre- and-post-Apartheid academia (Mabokela *et al.*, 2004; Carolissen & Bozalek, 2017). Addressing all these issues at one time is complex. Addressing them individually is illogical.

The reason for the absence is the long unrecorded history of genocide, generational trauma, subjugation and exclusion of Black (men and) women to educational institutions in South Africa (Khan, 1990; Eddy, 2017), which is still borne by the current generations. The educational exclusion keeps the majority of Black people out of most other institutions (Boughey & Niven, 2012; Cooper, 2015; Liccardo & Botsis, 2015; Leibowitz, 2016). Many Black women remain last on the agenda in hierarchical contexts, unless she fights (and exhausts) herself to find a place. However, what proves to be the bigger challenge once Black women have disrupted their own thinking about identity and roles, is keeping the spaces open to others. The literature thus shows that not much changes in these contexts despite some Black women who enter.

2.11 Chapter summary

The process of change is exceedingly retarded, mostly due to historical and social beliefs of who deserves and belongs in places in positions in higher education. In the higher ranks there seems to be an unwillingness to make shifts and space for Black women despite evidence that Black women have the ability to manage and maintain academic rigour. The literature also shows that influences of deeply ingrained and unacknowledged racism, sexism and classism continue to affect Black women the most. The lessons to be taken from developments intersectional feminist research opens the way for relevant theories to explore the core issues at play in our specific context. Understanding that this thesis has filled a gap in the literature as well as opening a space for further research, counters the tardy process of social transformation surrounding the issues affecting Black women in academia. More than mere rewriting of policies is needed if we want to work against the static cognitive dissonance surrounding Black women's experiences in the higher education workplace. Higher education structures and culture are partners in retarding processes and the following chapter gives indication of how critique and further development of theoretical frameworks in this area may proceed.

Chapter Three

Theoretical Framework

> *[T]he generative theme cannot be found in people, divorced from reality; nor yet in reality, divorced from people – Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Freire, 2005)*

3.1 Introduction

My theoretical approach stems from a strong psychosocial belief that human beings, especially those considered as less educated or less academically sophisticated, should not "be use" as if they are ethnographic subjects. People should partner in studies about their fit in societies. Black women especially have been subjected to a patriarchal and colonial "baaskap" or owned by men and white people. Women and Black peoples' stories of their oppression have only been selectively listened to and their research have mostly gone unappreciated and critiqued as lacking in academic rigour. Autoethnography, as a newly relevant and recognised means of research, can assist in waking us from our past slumber. This study's adapted approaches are necessary for empowerment from enforced methods of the past, be it psychosocial disconnect, different theoretical approaches or political stasis, to benefit an entire society or only an "othered" or marginalised culture. Employing several theories as underpinning, I believe that there is no one theory which can address the considerations which must be taken. Theories are to be developed and sharpened as tools and employed to build a means of interrogation and to critique the status quo.

The theoretical approach is complex as I search for new ways to investigate narratives of a new incumbent, that is a Black woman in an old arena. It introduces a spectrum of tried theories to hone and create a unique one for this thesis. If we want to interrogate both tangible (living conditions, representation in workplaces) and intangible (feeling of non-belonging) influences which are unique and seldom vocalised, we have to grow our own theories to interpret the conditions. Archer (2007) aptly describes how difficult it can be "making our way through the world" especially when we lack the sense of belonging as well as the desired "cultural capital" of education, class and economic status (Bourdieu 1986).

The mix of approaches employed is an indication of the complexity yet it aims to show that it is important to examine and critique the *to and fro* interplay between Black women and

their institutional contexts – where some find their fit, where some do not and the possible internal and external reasons for the experience of not fitting in. To think critically about our roles in these factors, Mezirow and others' theories (Lundgren & Poell, 2016; Donoghue, Merriam & Biesta, 2018) offer a framework for working and adaptive reflection which takes one on a deeper journey than merely writing a story as a *description* of the problem, to *strategies* for addressing the problem and considering the *merit and relevance* of the problem.

The use of the theories of habitus, Critical Race and Feminist Theory, Standpoint Theory and Intersectionality, aim to underpin the logic in addressing issues of a "deeper journey" of self, sex, race and class as social constructs. These theories are not only to allow the Black woman academic to critique her own notions but for white academia to understand the awful position of standing in this messy and muddy place and to perform its part.

In her 1982 address, "Learning from the Sixties" (Blacklist, 2012), Audre Lorde said: "there is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single issue lives" (para. 15) and "[t]here are no new ideas, just new ways of giving those ideas we cherish breath and power in our own living" (para. 3).

3.2 Stemming from theories

Positivist theorists conflate factors to a singular result. Positivist theories utilise methods which "neutralized the values and emotions of individual scientists" or researchers (Bailey & Cuomo, 2008:688). It serves the dominant powers to have their discourses repeated, even using new words, as this maintains their positions of power. In these ideas of "single-issue" lives there is no acknowledgment of the relevance of unknown factors when investigating possible matrixes in intersectionality. Inductive qualitative theory can be located within known meta-theories.

Standpoint theory holds that our levels of understanding the world is a measure for experiential knowledge. Our individual experiences are what give us our positionality. This alone, or sole, stance is not the case which Black feminist standpoint theory wishes to support (Nathan and Scobell, 2012a). The individual narratives are combined to show the intersectionality, or various and differential ways, of Black women's experiences. The reason that Black feminist studies investigate individual narratives and understanding of individual positionality is to pose investigations of "similarities and differences amongst" narratives. From this ontological stance, Black women, and arguably the rest of the world,

have deeper understanding of levels of advantage and disadvantage. Black feminist literature shows the ways in which Black women are most economically, physically and educationally disadvantaged in most societies. We lack cultural capital that is normatively valued by dominant society and thus other ways of finding a better place in the world. This is not where we aim to end. However, most white people refuse to acknowledge that it is one hundred times harder, takes more intelligence and prowess to end elsewhere than intended. The intention is thus also to insist that we must overcome more to achieve similar goals to white men and white women. Evidence from my own narrative shows that "non-formal learning and tacit knowledge" is brought with us to our learning and work contexts (Eraut, 2000). These knowledges are vital to challenging and changing our institutions to being responsive to the needs of a just society (Clegg, 2016; Henkeman, 2016b).The reason is to create a decolonised society for Black women who will come after us. It is not enough to stop at awareness that we do not fit and have to fight to forge space. We need to alter the spaces where we do not belong and do not possess the appreciation we long for and deserve.

Grounded theory aims at the deconstruction of societal norms and beliefs of "if one can, everyone can" (Freeman, 1993; Denzin, 1997; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Human beings form basic theoretical frameworks, paradigms or philosophies through lived experiences of our relationships and interplay within our contexts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Leshem & Trafford, 2007). The subjective stance is our first call about particular factors with the "established values" of "tradition" (Freire & Shor, 1987). Our opinions are formations of ideas about how the world works, where we fit and how we can relate our likes and dislikes in consideration of the other (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Sindic, 2011).

3.3 Developing theory for a transformed society

In a colonised or controlled society, some of us are taught not to express our opinions because our thoughts and feelings are of less value (Fanon, 1964; Freire, 2005). The notion of a colonised nation is two-fold: i) the culture which is dominant holds value for everyone in society, but only some belong and have ease of access; ii) the culture which holds less value is not widely publicised, is deemed offensive but it serves the dominant culture to have it maintained. Attached to these taught ideologies are oppositional people who instil similar notions in younger generations to spread their messages across communities (Fanon, 1964; Freire, 2005).

The repercussions are intricately woven. Black/African Feminism for societal transformation is a concept stemming from Critical Race Theory, Intersectional Feminist Theory and Standpoint Theory (Fanon, 1964; Crenshaw, 1989; Essed, 1992). Yet, transformative notions have not placed Black women as a priority for support towards progression. Intersectional feminism offers a critical evaluation of the educational system as it supports the hierarchal colonialist effort to hold Black women down. Judging by the low representation, as shown in Chapter One, higher education does not seem to offer the necessary pivots for Black women to find their own space. Claiming to be the most critical of domains, HE continues to play a role in perpetuating the challenges of Black women academics' experiences. The issues faced by Black women academics in South Africa remain inextricably linked to the white and male-dominated Apartheid and socio-cultural systems. The remnants of Apartheid history and its effects on its people form enabling and constraining roles on the interplay between Black women academics and HEIs and those who act within these domains (Amuwo, 2004; Herman, 2011; Ndebele & Maphosa, 2014). Changing colonised mindsets is not a task which can be changed within one or even two generations. Policy does not change culture. Hard, militant, and enforced laws make it easier to bring about change. There is a difference between how Apartheid was exercised and the slow pace of transformation. Apartheid was decided and absolute. Transformation is a process.

The theoretical lenses of Standpoint Theory, Critical Race Theory and Intersectional Feminism allows the researcher to alter her gaze. Her focus moves to and from herself to the institution, her position in the institution, and to consider other stances. She is not taken up in her own experiences alone, nor only in her current situation, but considers other peoples' views and positions from earlier in her life. It is possible to view the self as both sometimes reluctant, or willing, subject to society and agent going against the grain in taking up opportunities not created for her or creating her own. The various roles, reiterations and reversals played throughout her childhood by society and her learned reactions can be seen more clearly. The diabolical and lasting effects of intergenerational historical, psychological violence on self and others remains un(der)explored (Mirza, 2009; hooks, 2013; Henkeman, 2016a). The stronger will to succeed against these negative factors are told in some narratives, but they are in need of development and application of theory.

No longer is it legal or acceptable in any part of society to beat, threaten, swear and shout at Black women and girls (West, 1995; Lugones, 2007). These practices do, however,

continue where poverty and seclusion exists and where Black women are powerless and not supported. In the higher enclaves of society, however, such blatant abuse will not be tolerated and the recourses available to Black women have proven invaluable. {This insert: In November 2020 white men beat an unarmed Black woman with a baseball bat in view of police, media and school children. The woman was part of a peaceful protest against racist practices at a Cape Town school which excluded Black children from its end-of-year function.} Yet, Black women are still "abused" by the culture and practices where they are made to feel incompetent, unwelcome and uncomfortable in HEIs. This thesis takes on the intersectional feminist obligation to problematise (hooks, 1994, 2006; Butler, 2004; Carver & Chambers, 2008) the social subtleties in HEIs which persist in excluding people on the basis of race/gender/class. The same theories used to investigate, report on, understand and change the culture of Black women's physical and other abuses can be explored to further interrogate and critique the "invisible violence" (Evans-winters *et al.*, 2010; Pillay, 2015; Henkeman, 2016a). These intersectional issues are more difficult to describe and no less harmful to our society as the physical abuse and exclusions legally practiced during slavery and Apartheid. As intersectional feminist researchers, we thus remain hard-pressed in making a task of opening opportunities to relay experiences. Had these not been issues, we too could have got on with other "more scientific" and "objective" research work.

The interplay between the individual, other individuals and the created culture determines much of the maintenance or changes which happen in the individual and/or the culture. There is so much for the Black woman academic to consciously challenge that, unless she strategically selects her projects, it can easily exhaust and cause her to neglect other sectors of her life (Collins, 2000; Collins & Bilge, 2016).

The beehive diagram below (Figure 3.3.1) shows who has the most enablers to access the spaces at the centre of society, example business ownership, managerial positions, academic leadership roles, and etcetera. White men (tiles closest to centre) have the easiest access and Black women (blue tiles furthest from centre) the least.

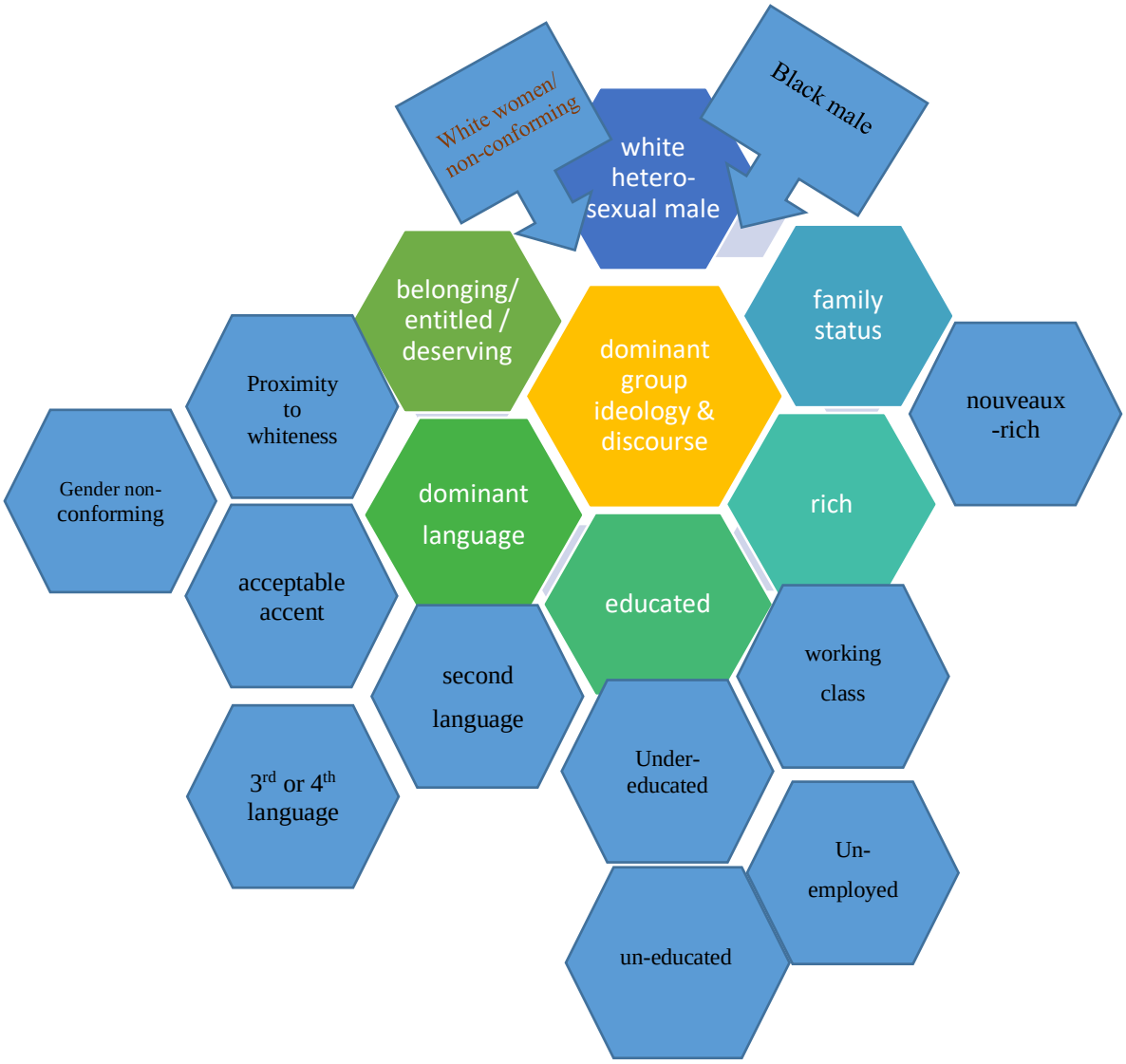


Figure 3.3.1. Proximity to access and success

3.4 Theory for challenging mindsets against Black women

The aim of transformation is to shift towards socially just theories. In South Africa the historical phase of coloniality has decoloniality as its post-Apartheid phase. Many Apartheid apologists argue that without colonisation South Africa would be recognised as dark Africa without its Western infrastructure and education. The counter argument is that a country did not have to be colonised and its people enslaved and impoverished in order for it to be Westernised while still maintaining and respecting the knowledges it held before. African people were rendered powerless by being robbed of their resources and keeping them on the lowest rungs of Western society (Fanon, 1986; Mngoma, 1997; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015).

The rational idea would thus be to include the least empowered in such societies in all discussions and decisions towards educational liberation: Black women (Mizra, 2009;

Evans-winters & Esposito, 2010). Foley (2010) explains succinctly how Marx's theory relates to the continued physical oppression and mental suppression of especially Black women to the stature of colonialist capitalism. The cycle is virtually impossible to break *en masse* unless more narratives become recorded history and what is taught in schools (Freire & Shor, 1987; hooks, 1994, 2010). Awareness of these factors should become salient for everyone witnessing the discrepancies of privilege and inequality within contexts. However, many who have privilege and are at the centre of financial, cultural and other forms of capital remain habitually or decidedly blind to the differences (Pease, 2010; Sue, 2011). They go so far as to blame the less privileged for their "condition". The concepts take on added meaning for those of us who do more than see and have experience of the hierarchies of the inequities as they play out in our lives and in our contexts (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 2000; Collins & Bilge, 2016).

Scholarly research from the North expects to remain and be recognised as the power-house from which all other research should flow. The top structures in institutions consist of those with either the least interest or the most to gain from the unequal status quo. Thus, changes in theoretical stances and methods are reluctantly and inadequately supported from the entrenched top. Just as the consequences of desired change either do not affect white men or will affect them most negatively by loss of subjects (Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010; Sue, 2011), changes in theory which amplify Black women's voices will silence Western ideologies (Nunley, 2009; Tsalach, 2013; Pillay, 2015). The trickle-down effect stalls the theories developed by and for Black women. Practice, culture and theory thus continue to have the dominant voices of Western eloquence heard. These theories expect objectivity from other researchers, which in itself is a subjective stance (Freire, 2005), while (Black) women are often described as being *too angry, too much, too emotional* (West, 1995) to be objective. Human beings cannot extract their emotions from their view of the world. Whatever we encounter triggers a memory of an experience which makes us highly subjective beings (Donoghue, Merriam & Biesta, 2018:90). Fanon (1964:39) postulates that it is not possible to be objective about a culture when we are part of that culture which serves or does not serve only certain groups. He warns that "rare colonized intellectuals find their own culture revealed to them" because the dominant groups investigate with theories which suit their own ends. This maintains the status quo by keeping the oppressed under-educated and/or subservient to the colonisers' view and ideology of how the world should be described and operate. Collingwood (2005) agrees that "private and personal views" are expressed in

researchers' philosophies which claim objectivity. Challenging the hierarchy calls for an educational system which transforms society (Freire & Shor, 1987; hooks, 1994). This should include the development and acceptance of theory by Black women. Transformed learning and teaching practices and applied theory are thus required (Lather, 2006; Donoghue *et al.*, 2018).

Unless the oppressed critique the oppressor and the opposing positions, transformation cannot become a reality. Due to the power relations in hierarchical societies, the privileged individuals may not wish for changes because the status quo serves them well. Unless the collective immediately agrees that change should happen, the desired changes are not effected, which causes conflict, riots and uprisings. Open communication is crucial because, unless individuals are asked to reflect critically on situations outside of their experiences, there will be a lack of understanding of conflicting views due. The oppressed should understand the position of comfort the oppressor is in and recognise that there is going to be a reluctance to shift. Freire speaks of a critical consciousness as the only way to "restore" humanity. Critical, transformative and social justice theorists and researchers undertake their research as it becomes obvious that other people in society do not see the rationality in change of historical assumptions (West, 1995; Davis & Maldonado, 2015). By not recording and banning the teaching of Black history, colonialists' efforts to diminish the role of Black people, their knowledge and efforts proved successful (Said, 1975). All the powers over Black women create dominant discourses which exclude Black women and, if present, exclude their voices, in society, religious institutions and education. These exclusionary practices include Black men fighting racism and white women opposing feminism.

3.4.1 Dominant discourses

> *I grew up in a community where higher education or university was not just a non-priority, it was an unknown concept. My teachers did not invite me to apply for university. Yet, here I am. – Shifting Sands by Jean Farmer*

The dominant culture in institutions of higher education is mostly concerned with their own success, which is maintained and sustained in the status quo. Educational institutions expect the same standard from everyone who enters, although they are quite aware that those accepted into the institutions are not from similar backgrounds. Families who have attended institutions before, have money and whose cultural capital familiarises them with the

demands, have a better chance of succeeding at and beyond their studies – relaying of course to top positions in institutions. The challenge, however, is in explaining the subjectivity of these perceptions as experiences. The Black girl is taught from a young age that she does not bear the "markers of identity" (DeLeon, 2010) as accountant, physicist or academic. However, once able to acknowledge our functions, we lay claim to belonging within a space and make that space part of who we are. Engaging or critiquing the dominant discourse makes the previously excluded or marginalised "I" a "contested" stance within domains such as HE. The contestation makes those served by the dominant discourse feel that their beliefs, considered as fact, are being unfairly criticised and that the "other" "I" is attempting to assert a new truth (Donoghue *et al.*, 2018). It is often at this point that the new person is accused of bringing personal feeling or emotion into research. Black women, in this case, soon stand accused of being hysterical, loud – too visible – and nonsensical in her expectations to be acknowledged (Collins, 2000; hooks, 2006). It is often found that white people, who are in many ways directly or closely invested in Black people's conditions of social disadvantage, cannot comprehend the struggle of being Black.

Some ideological views or theories are foreign to people because of what is missing in their repertoire of experience or because of a refusal to listen and respect alternate views. Understanding the concept of cognitive dissonance offers a logical, psychological explanation for this lack of understanding, empathy and almost wilful ignorance (Leibowitz, Bozalek, Rohleder, Carolissen & Swartz, 2010; Akram, 2013; Sugawara & Nikaido, 2014). Dominant discourses are substantiated by dominant evidence which then becomes core beliefs within that domain while going unquestioned (Samuel, Dhunpath & Amin, 2016; Kang'ethe & Chivanga, 2016). New and opposing evidence which does not support these views elicit feelings of defensiveness and discomfort (Daniels, 2010; Pittman, 2010; Tolich, 2010). People from the dominant group will deny, reject and rationalise against any contrary evidence. It is the reason that many white and privileged people refuse to acknowledge that their dominant positions stem from a violent past. Highly recognised white academics, like many white leaders in government, prefer to believe that colonised countries benefitted more than they were destroyed from being colonised. Even in a country like South Africa where close to 90% of the population is Black, this discourse of white people remains dominant, and a point many Black people struggle to argue against.

Creating new theories and discourses seemingly happens "at the expense of authoritative knowledge" (Butler, 2005:37) rather than in complement. Academic projects are our political projects which become the markers by which we are identified: activist, academic, feminist and our activities become part of the history of the culture. DeLeon (2010) says that reflecting on our struggles and triumphs gives humans an opportunity to theorise and understand ourselves and what it is that we are working towards changing. The onus rests upon the individual perceiving the inequality to explain how and when others are "guilty" of disrupting pathways by exercising and perpetuating cultural violence upon them.

3.4.2 Acknowledging the intersections of being a Black woman academic

> *African feminisms in addition emphasise the power and agency of African women in particular to theorise from their cultures and lived experiences to produce knowledge that is contextually relevant, builds relationships, heals the self, the community and the larger socio-cultural context.(Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010:619)*

White history never served Black women. Minimalised in the Bible and diminished in all other roles of relevance, she is the least acknowledged for making any cultural mark. She is then socialised in such a way as to diminish her own role as negligible in society. Recorded history serves these researchers to not improve society for a greater good. Yet narratives from the margins are being encouraged and slowly granted space. This is the purpose of social science (Sugiman, Gergen, Wagner & Yamada, 2008). Emergent theories, such as race and feminist theory, have developed in the belief that opinions or realities of those marginalised should be investigated for how these relations play out in relevant context (Lugones, 2010; Pillay, 2015). The Black feminist and intersectional feminist movement is one example of a call of persons aware of even further marginalisation (Yosso, 2005; Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010; hooks, 2015). The theories which developed from these actions may be clustered as grassroots transformative, critical theories (Freire & Shor, 1987; Essed & Goldberg, 2002) because it extends to even the furthest margins of the most unrecognised, under-valued sectors of the population. These theories extend to be adaptable for the benefit of research from the largest to the smallest groups of under-represented women and girls in South Africa.

Critical race (Essed & Goldberg, 2002) and intersectional feminist theory (hooks, 2015) set out to show that not all people hold the same assumptions because the marginalised have different lived experiences. The argument critical theorists make is that assumptions of race,

class, gender and other socio-political forces are not real and used by racists, sexists and fascists as evidence that some beings are more deserving than others. Intersectional feminism, as all critical theories, is not aimed at the self as the foremost consideration, but rather social justice for all (Fanon, 1964; Freire & Shor, 1987; Collins, 2000; Collins & Bilge, 2016). Before this can be done, however, it is necessary that Black women must own and define their lives, history, narratives and identities (hooks, 1994, 2006; Collins, 2000b)

Those benefitting most from these assumptions are the opposite dominant part of society who expect interactions between them and the marginalised to maximally serve the dominant group. These kinds of discriminations also play out within higher education structures; Black women are the most objectified other.

Black women are the farthest in proximity to the white male dominant discourse. The social and political hierarchies of influence prevail in academia and theoretical underpinnings (Bailey & Cuomo, 2008). Furthermore, the notion that concepts of race, gender and class are three strands which can be neatly separable for discussion and analyses tends to conflate the issues affecting Black women across contexts (Crenshaw, 1989).

For Black African women, living in a society where she is placed in the lowest position, factors influencing her lifespan intersect in unique ways. Her characteristics are considered by many, consciously or unconsciously, as being less human so these intersections most often create a tangle of constraints (Yosso, 2005; Lugones, 2007; Sugiman *et al.*, 2008). These factors determine that she has to do much more than others in her society in order for her to achieve what society deems as success (Mirza, 2009; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; hooks, 2015). The intention of the dominant culture is psychological. The Black women should either believe what society thinks of her or to make it difficult for her to challenge these beliefs. The power relations between her and others cause discomforting situations when she tries to make known the identity she decides on and tries to exercise her agency. Being a Black feminist in academia is challenging to every power structure (Gasperi *et al.*, 2012) of society because it is agency exercised for the bottom of society in the most powerful hierarchical contexts.

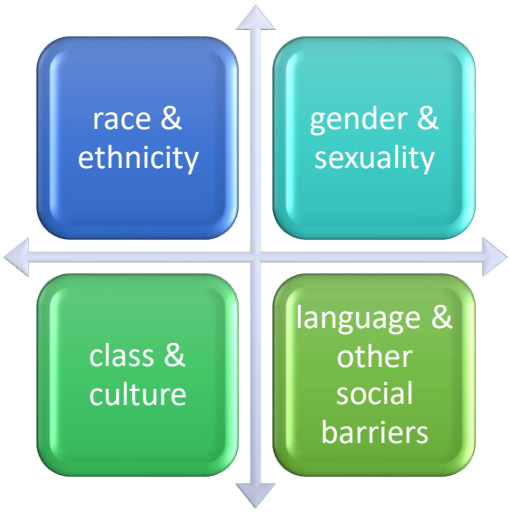


Figure 3.4.1:Barriers against Black women's agency

There are no homogenous experiences of Black women's educational trajectories. Black women's experiences of growing up and living in a hierarchically divided society, such as Apartheid and post-Apartheid, are marked by inequalities on every level of society, including in HEIs. How we perceive what happens in our contexts or institutions is influenced by our past. The complexities are often ignored in favour of research with more certain concrete outcomes. Similar to many intersectional feminists, hooks has been vocal on many pages of many publications and on many pages about how there is but one "white" "supremacist" "patriarchal culture" (hooks, 2000:117, 2003:26, 150, 182) to blame which has been encouraged and "normalized" in the "mass media" so that they are now largely considered to be "unproblematic" (hooks 2006, 2013, 2015).

This, however, does not mean the critique must always happen external to the Black woman. She must also look within herself and her own interactions for how she continues to pay homage to the systems which undermine her value.

hooks (1994) proposes that feminism cannot be considered reasonable if it does not take into consideration the degrading and oppressive systems beyond gender discrimination. There is, she says, a myriad of arrangements at play when considering power of one system over another: gender and race domination interwoven with class, culture, identity, marginalisation, socialisation, criminalisation, transgression, sexualisation, mysticism and exoticism – are some. Intersectionality places one critical lens upon a multi-faceted lens and reaches beyond the bias of domestic and work place oppression of women. It aims to shift towards transformation of the individual and society. The many variations of the occurrence

of discomfort which may be felt by an individual or group of individuals are often context specific.

Whether we experience a sense of belonging in a present context may well be influenced by the experiences of past contexts which has helped in the formation of our identities.

> We bring our past along into the present
> either consciously or subconsciously, unwillingly or willingly.
> (Farmer, 2012, HELTASA presentation)

3.4.3 Heightening awareness

The awareness of racial and gender oppression stemming directly from colonialism was not going to come from European cultures whom were served under colonial dispensations (Carver & Chambers, 2008; hooks, 2013; Collins & Bilge, 2016). Black feminism was seen as a threat to white feminism and Black feminists were accused of wanting to separate the movement of gender equality (hooks, 2015). Black women recognised that everyone had power over her (hooks, 2008; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) and figured ways to be critical of social structures of race and its interconnectedness to class and economy (hooks, 2000, 2008; Mizra, 2009). Critiquing what is accepted by dominant culture and discourse, like unacknowledged privilege, is never comfortable for those critiquing, nor for the critiqued (Essed & Goldberg, 2002; Cole, 2017). Standpoint theory sees Black women and other minority groups as having a view of intersections which is different to white feminism yet unique to each individual. There is not a load of experiences which make marginalised groups homogenous (Nathan and Scobell, 2012a).

A specific awareness or responsiveness affects the interplay between the context and those who have been habitually marginalised – it is what W.E.B Du Bois in 1903 called *double consciousness* (Essed & Goldberg, 2001).While we may not always be aware of concept definitions which fall outside of our field of knowledge, it does not mean that we do not experience them or are not aware of them. Du Bois says that the troublesome nature of being Black and unjustly treated means that while living we are constantly also looking at ourselves from the outside. We are split between our inner self and wondering how we are being judged by white people and Black men. Mirza (2009:101) articulates this:

> *the starting point of much feminist theorising takes as its terms of reference the gendered exclusion of women from the patriarchal discourse of citizenship, definitions of who counts*

> *as a citizen become preoccupied with equality, acceptance and membership into the masculine civic polity. The terrain of feminist academic discourse thus slips into the revalorisation of difference and celebration of the private sphere rather than considering the more challenging position of 'acts of citizenship'.*

For Black women academics, realising that her issues are taboo because they are so difficult to deal with leads to both personal and academic frustration. We can no longer ignore, misrecognise and make invisible these issues for convenience (Ahmed, 2014). The constraints as well as the enablers encountered and perceived by the marginalised individuals should lead to better understanding of how to improve interactions within our institutions.

3.5 Assimilating or belonging?

A sense of not belonging is more than a crisis for anyone's identity. It is burdensome to constantly experience both conscious and unconscious racism, classism and sexism. In *Toward the African Revolution* Fanon (1964:120) indicates that "the conquest by the peoples of the lands that belong to them" is one of the first means to an African independence. Transformation policies must be that Black women take up or create their own place on their terms. Denying our experiences in institutions as figments of imagination is a further insult and a form of silencing. These perceptions cannot be shrugged off as it becomes a sixth sense which has developed through authentic experiences, yet there is only one's word as proof. Continued feelings of exclusion can often not be justified. Inclusion came about only due to the insistence and hard-fought battle of the marginalised. The change in practice enforced upon the perpetrators does not, however, always mean that their attitude has changed about marginalised and inclusion. The feeling of disconnectedness by the implicit, institutionalised exclusion from the main group causes one to feel emotionally removed from peers and colleagues. Being the only woman, being the only Black woman, makes it hard to engage because of the constant irritation and awareness that others do not see you as equal.

Patriarchal systems have not afforded Black women a sense of home and belonging, thus robbing her of having a position of power over anything including her own life (Boyce Davies, 1998). White males have laid claim to higher education as their domain and they are supported by white women. When Black women are present in HEIs they may "embody diversity" (Ahmed, 2014:218) and run the risk of merely serving institutions which need to

pass the equity policies. Black women can fill spaces such as cleaners or administrative positions without challenging institutional spaces. As soon as she steps outside of that space into the academic role she is the cause of discomfort and others find it difficult to recognise her as "present" (Ahmed, 2014:109, 218). When Black women in South Africa shift from maid to academic her "identity" has shifted too much for whites and males to remain comfortable. There is an awareness that the status quo is threatened when Black women are not careful in choosing their words, their means of address. Ahmed promises that these are emotional experiences for all involved but that we have to challenge our bodies to become unaccommodating of hierarchical norms.

Yuval-Davis (2006:197) points out that feeling like we "belong" is an important part of our social and political identity which then becomes "articulated and politicized only when it is threatened in some way". Behaviours of dominance and subservience are instilled in us through socialisation as children – within our families, schools and other institutions. We are taught to tie up our wayward hair, accept when boys get the larger share, behave better in the presence of white people, and listen quietly when spoken at. Recognising that these are marginalising behaviours towards "just Black girls" leads to discernment that race, gender, class identity can be discriminatory interactions. The sense of being constantly threatened and treated as second class citizens without investigating the feeling of not belonging means that not belonging becomes the norm of practice which serves the powerful. Black women continue in this "master and maid" interaction either due to cultural habit or for purposes of living and survival. What this does, however, is serve to perpetuate the powerlessness of the Black girl and woman who are the most heavily burdened in society. Ahmed (2012) states that by saying race is "too difficult" and "racism is inevitable" is key in it being reproduced. The subtleties of perpetuation can be masked as good cultural habits; women are objects to be treated "like a lady" and mistreated if she does not adhere; the girl-child is the second-class citizen not only in the minds of men but also in the minds of women. It is in HEIs that Black women should challenge our own tendency to not openly object to what is quietly intolerable, which is as important as challenging blatant racist thinking (Ahmed, 2014). It is in HEIs that we encounter the white people and Black men who mistreat, misguide, misrepresent or make invisible the working-class Black women who enable them to achieve success.

Unless the experiences are documented and investigated for the feelings of tension which exist within them, we cannot begin to change the status quo. This documentation is seldom going to be carried out by those benefitting most and who already "belong" due to their dominance, so it becomes the voice of dissent, the alternative narrative (Yosso, 2005; hooks, 2010; Ahmed, 2014). Writing or talking about these issues means that we are at the start of no longer accepting these as positions we are happy with. Acting outside of societal norms, however, means that these then become issues of discord. Further to recording current experiences, past experiences are equally important to understanding that I got to this position under vastly different and often denied conditions. Denying my past experiences means to disregard what I offer in the current context. The individual's sense of capabilities or value-add to the context is undermined not only by others, but self-doubt sets in. Individuals who feel disenfranchised are less likely to assert in practicing abilities and act in an agential manner and negatively affecting feelings of resilience. Affirmation for those of us who feel doubtful about being accepted is to realise our functions of challenging and changing the cultural spaces we enter (Yuval-Davis, 2006; Carolissen, 2016).

When we have no sense of collective belonging there is an unequal community (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006) and not a shared move towards a transformed society. Belonging, marginalisation and exclusion were all part of the social constructs experienced in varying degrees by Black children.

It is easier to criticize the structural exclusions as the blame is against an entity which has now been abolished. The exclusionary practices within your own societies on the other hand is a much more complex and delicate issue to address. Sense of belonging and societal marginalisation are multifaceted. To explain to someone who did not experience it, but was also party to that marginalisation, is a sensitive subject. Feelings of estrangement within the culture you are supposedly part of, could be denied for fear of insulting others and because others feel accused.

> *No level of individual self-actualization alone can sustain the marginalized and oppressed. We must be linked to collective struggle, to communities of resistance that move outward into the world. – bell hooks, Sister of the Yam: Black women and Self-Recovery (1993)*

Black and "coloured" families were scattered, separated from each other and then excluded from mainstream society. This made the "collective struggle" and a "move outward into the world" which hooks speaks of, much harder. Yet our families and our teachers managed to

draw some of us together, for a drawn-out and painful struggle against the Apartheid government's efforts and the effects these efforts had on our people (Fataar, 2010; Leibowitz *et al.*, 2012). In some areas, we have succeeded.

3.5.1 Silence is decorum

Being verbal through speaking or writing about intersectional matters in HE is often deemed problematic or even anarchist (DeLeon, 2010; Cole, 2017). By its very nature, transformative theory is unsettling and discomforting as is any theory which challenges the dominant discourse (Lundgren & Poell, 2016; Salem, 2016). Post-colonial theories are concentrated on critiquing colonial white and male-dominated society confining the lives of those "beneath" (Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010; Eynon, 2017). As social beings, how and where we interact have influence over knowledge and ideas, yet Black women have to be most considerate about appropriately engaging. Freire and Shor (1987) postulate that "critical transformation" comes about when teachers learn how to engage students to act outside of what is expected by authorities. This limits our learning as well as our teachings (hooks, 2003; Freire, 2005; Donoghue *et al.*, 2018). Human experience and reaction are largely determined by the interactions relating past to present. Constructivist theory is based on the notion that the norms we follow in our thinking, speaking and actions are socially constructed (Gergen & Davis, 1985; Essed, 1992; Malherbe *et al.*, 2000).

Steve Biko (1946–1977), in his collection of essays from 1969, *I write what I like* (1978), says that "the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed" (date:page no). The title of Biko's book shows that, for some of us, acting, thinking and writing remains within the limits placed on our identities while others take risks against ruling powers. The focus in critical theories remains on how discrepancies in social structures affect groups of people in lived experiences (Essed & Goldberg, 2002; Yosso, 2005). Added consideration needs to be taken for the issues affecting those who are disenfranchised and marginalised within the marginalised groups, such as Black women and Black transgender persons (Crenshaw, 1989). Intersectional feminist theory takes constructivist theory further and considers how the relations between race, gender and power are constructed to keep Black women under control (Isoke, 2013; Collins & Bilge, 2016; Salem, 2016). Exclusion and silencing affect Black women in almost every aspect of society, especially in the public domains – maintaining Black women's sole position as cleaner and care-giver. Dominant cultures determine the structures which position women

and Black beings at the bottom of society. Intersectionality theory is based on the identities we are "given" as being discriminated against as Black women and the different factors which affect individuals (Crenshaw, 1989; Clandinin *et al.*, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2010). The issues we are confronted with are determined by the "need to control" Black women from different sectors of society. Where Black women do not behave as expected, we are named or "lynched" as loud, uncontrolled, hysterical and needing to be disciplined. As long as the marginalised are silent and complacent through lack of education, identity, agency and sense of belonging, the dominant discourse prevails. Required are education, guided reflection, collective communities and a strong culture of support to confront oppressive practices which hold [Black] women down in society (Johns & Marlin, 2010) and in domains such as HEIs.

3.6 Challenges in academic domains

Academic domains are *controlled* and few of us are allowed to affect, critique and influence thinking. "Master narratives" (Sugiman *et al.*, 2008) from the dominant culture have developed the meta-theories. These theories need to be critiqued and deconstructed for newer narratives to be given credit. Offering any topic other than the preferred nuance in how we can adhere, raising issues of inequality, especially around race and racism in academia, is particularly challenging (Sue, Torino, Capdilupo, Rivera & Lin, 2009; Sue, 2015). These criticisms go to the heart of the reasons for lack of proper change. However, the critical view is that many appreciated academic and other ways of doing are dominated by Western perceptions of what types of research are valued (Fanon, 1964, 1986). Power relations which aim to dominate, marginalise and silence Black women are tackled by constructivists: Critical and Intersectional Feminist theorists. The aim of critical theorists is to claim belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2006; hooks, 2008; Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010; Collins & Bilge, 2016).

The need to move progressively from knowledge power to powerful knowledge (DeLeon, 2010; de Oliveira Andreotti *et al.*, 2015; Clegg, 2016; Keane *et al.*, 2016) – for example from Anthropology a necessitated shift towards the use of constructivist theory such as autoethnographic narrative studies. Critical feminist research (hooks, 1994; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Butler, 2005; Carver & Chambers, 2008) has shown the extent of the limits placed on revolutionary debate and that further research for intersectional feminist thought needs to be led by the marginalised; not debated with those in the centre. Constructivist or

critical theory is a complex communication between forms of human knowledge (Denzin, 1997). In HEIs the scope should be re-informing, deconstructing and redesigning social cultures without exclusion of the moral dilemmas we feel from past lived experiences. Our pasts are made up of factual events which take on emotional relevance through our experiences during these events, as well as the contextual understanding each one brings to the conversation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

3.6.1 Academic domains and dominion over Black women academics in South Africa

Our experiences are always influenced by the context in which these events take place. We are also influenced by how those facts were presented to us – through socialisation, historical representation and discourse. Teachers and students from different racial, societal and educational backgrounds within a divided society like South Africa cannot successfully manage critical education for social justice (Fanon, 1964, 1986; Freire, 2001). The need to have a common understanding of where HE is heading, as well as what is being taught and learned, is often missing, especially in HWUs. Our experiences, contexts and knowledge at the time of the learning is paramount to what we learn and how we learn new concepts (Neal-Jackson, 2018). Acquiring new knowledge is thus a uniquely personal procedural process which, in South Africa, is influenced by racialised perceptions. Where there are still lecturers who refer to Black people in derogatory terms and students who disrespect Black women cleaning staff, the hope for integration is minimal. While rape and rape culture is denied in South African universities, as in the rest of society, women will not be able to live their true potential. Unless we can arrive at a common intercultural communication experience, change will happen too slowly, as it has, for Black women to progress.

In *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon (1986) asks what it is that the Black colonised person wants. If the Black woman or girl is the "other", this means that dominant culture and theory do not represent her. Fanon (1964) says that existence means that we are "in relation" to another: Black in comparison to white has led us to very Black in comparison to fairer Black; Black man in comparison to Black woman. This means that the educated and outspoken Black woman who is constantly *different* irrespective of the domain, every domain sees her as "one of us" and "not one of us". In her community, she is one of the Black women but other because of her education. She is not like the other Black educated people because she is a woman. In the academy she is one of the educated women but she is "not" white. She is also one of the educated Blacks but she is not a man. Maria Lugones

(2010) refers to this as decolonial feminisms where in colonised contexts the Black woman is invisible, but by comparison to others. The concepts used in meta or better-known theories are contextualised, as I use these to describe my experiences of being a Black girl and woman with a desire for learning. Hearing the voices of the marginalised individuals and what their needs to success, academic and otherwise, would be is not the sole aim of this theory-building. My view that education, like politics, is not a blunt tool, pulls through to towards adding considerations for methods and analysis. Building theory for social justice and "a greater public good" (Behari-Leak & Mckenna, 2017) so that we can start to demystify ways to improve access and success right down to the contexts of Black women. One of the unrecognised educational inequalities is the lack of the influence of those who have struggled through an unequal system. Theories and methods cannot remain unscrutinised while we expect students with unequal access to succeed equally. For academic access to lead towards success, contextual, political and personal influences need acknowledgment.

Racism, classism and sexism remain abstract arguments of experience which are often described as imagined, a chip on the shoulder and being overly sensitive. People who have been previously oppressed do at times act in ways which portray them as inferior in a culture which values only certain behaviours. While Black women have gained access there is a need to recreate the space so that we can find our own place, not as it is offered to us. Like me, a significant number of Black academics express notions that marginalised intellectuals have a responsibility to raise discomforting issues in conversations and publications before blindly pledging solidarity to the dominant culture in institutions (Leibowitz et al., 2010; Mabokela & Mlambo, 2017; hooks, 1994; Hughes, 2008b; Stetsenko, 2008). Said (in Iskander & Rustom, 2010:150) affirms "that the intellectual belongs on the same side with the weak and unrepresented". My motivation remains to improve understanding of the self and context towards open dialogue and change within our institutions so that we may become literate in each other's dialects.

To acquire literacy is…to dominate these techniques in terms of consciousness to understand what one reads and to write what one understands; it is to communicate graphically…a self-transformation producing a stance of intervention in one's context (Freire, 2001:86).

Marxist theory speaks about very specific relationships between the people within an economically motivated society. The people he considers, however, are not necessarily racially categorized, i.e., one race dominating another. Paolo Freire (1998, 2001) takes this theory towards the racial divisions which marginalise the "othered" within or to the outside of acceptable society. When the "othered" is allowed into the dominant culture, there are defined roles she must play out to maintain harmony within the social context. Her behaviour must be in accordance and she is expected to assimilate and not bring of her own culture (unless perhaps to entertain) into that space lest it causes the dominant to feel some discomfort. In Iskander & Rustom, 2010:304-309), a colonised people cannot accede to scholarship or even descriptions of self because these are not true representations. We should rather concentrate our narratives and histories of ourselves, the marginalised, even if, or precisely because, this is in opposition to the status quo.

Collins (1995) expresses her belief that in uplifting the Black woman from her position of most marginalised is to address many of the oppressive issues burdening society. hooks (1994) supports the notion that for the feminist movement to be based in the reparation firstly of the position of Black women, means that all other feminist concerns are addressed.

Mirza (2011) also indicates that intersectional studies have shown these double or even triple jeopardy theories as insufficient in describing the multitude of mixes of challenges. Mirza (2009:3) iterates this point:

> A Black feminist epistemology is contextual and contingent and examines the differentiating and variable organizing logics of race, calls and gender, and other social divisions…that structure women's lives in different historical times.

The intersectional feminist literature adheres to investigating the power play between the individual and her context as well as the process by which she may move from the margin to the centre. Intersectional Feminist theory acknowledges the narratives of those who are othered in ways which are interlinked and not looking to be merely "existing in society" but to "reconstruct" it (hooks, 1984). The multiple ways in which society exerts, or attempts to exert, its power over Black women is termed intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989). The ways in which Black women are negatively categorised as domestic objects are often so intermingled that one cannot delineate and quantify the oppressions. Crenshaw argues that because of this challenge to legally or formally categorise the oppressions, these injustices are difficult to name and confront. This renders the challenges "invisible".

Social inquiry necessitates alternate perspectives, showing how these co-exist and influence our understanding. There are no definitive answers in social theory which should allow the use and building of theories for the specific perspective ((Wenger-Trayner, 2013)).

CRT is concerned with the voices of people of colour. These are the voices which will struggle to find the vocabulary to describe the invisible forms of oppression which has become an ingrained part of ourselves. These are the voices which can attempt to describe for others the microaggressions which continue to exist. Those aggressions which are perpetrated against us and those we perpetrate against ourselves.

Cole (2009) suggests that, through education, the racial divide is either exploited by silencing the other or attempted to be rectified by voicing what is other. The notion of one race's supremacy, says Cole (2017), can be countered (albeit disproportionately) by being cognisant of how we can deal with issues of the existent inequality. For the South African condition, it can be argued that racial discrimination and capital are inextricably linked. CRT works from the notion that "racism has permanence" (Cole, 2017:33, 121) and this is thus institutionalised in white privilege.

Whiteness and Blackness suited the Apartheid governments' social intentions for South Africa, just as it suits the same patriarchal society to see Man as superior to Woman. The aim was that we form our identities of inferiority and supremacy around these labels. In my mind, we do not carry these labels only for ourselves but also for others, meaning that if I see myself as superior, I necessarily see others as inferior and vice versa. Intersectionality explains that there are intricacies and facets to our experiences of being subject to oppression (hooks, 1984; Collins & Bilge 2016). The issues of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, tone of skin intersections are all relevant to varying degrees depending on the context the individual finds herself in. They are relevant to interactions not only because of how we perceive others but also how we perceive ourselves in relation to others.

The (marginalised) individual's "resistant speech" is subject to "the politics of interpretation and reception just as her "speech" is only her perception of events. All our perceptions are interpreted with the aid of our past experiences, interactions and the influences these had over us. If a Black woman feels that she is acting or speaking in a manner not expected of her, it is because she has most likely been socialised to speak in a different way. Likewise, if a white male does not listen to her or minute her speech, it is due to his socialisation that her opinion is not (as) valued as his own. However, if the Black woman can step outside of

her social boundaries to engage on a different level, she has the right to be met. While the change may not happen at the same pace or time, it should not dissuade intersectional feminists from finding new ways to insert and assert their work by framing it differently so we can find meaning.

Theorising the literature on educational and academic experiences of Black women is a task concerning an investigation of the various scenes or domains where education occurs (Yuval-Davis, 2006; Ellis, 2007; Mirza, 2009). These scenes do not always have to be scholarly because to neglect the social impact on education is to miss the subliminal messaging we receive from birth. Everything we think about ourselves is learned and as Black women we are gendered, racialised and classified into a space in society. African-American and South African research has long been concerned with the impacts of these messages on our perceptions and experiences of formal education (hooks, 1994; Collins, 2000; Mabokela, 2003; Hughes, 2008b). Mabokela (2003) questions why Black women are offered, and are accepting of, roles as "donkeys" in institutions when they have worked so much harder than anyone else to achieve their positions. These are the issues which need to be explored through interrogating ourselves. Our experiences, and who and how we are, are all complicit in the constraining factors which sustain past inequities. On the other hand, we also need to make explicit what we and our institutions and work groups do which maintain or lessen the inequalities and exclusionary practices in our institutions (Vally & Dalamba, 1999; Leibowitz, Ndebele & Winberg, 2013). While some institutions welcome such interaction, others find this slightly intimidating when researchers embark on overtly political agendas.

Ladson-Billings and Tate (2006:201) call for "*activist research"* (original italics) because despite all awareness and years of "actions" around power-relations instituted through education and society when we were children, we see little done in "redirecting attention to curriculum, students, or related equity issues." In all domains, economic power has a way of "sustaining privilege and disadvantage educationally, socially, and politically" always with Black girls and women on the lower end. Notions of white supremacy and Black inferiority is "insidious" and inescapable when one is part of mainstream society (hooks, 2013). The "scarred" "self-esteem", sense of self-worth of people, worse affected being Black women, has been under-researched (Soudien, 2013). Often, as part of society, we all play into "bio-power" of gender roles and the structural powers of societies we are part of

so that we become complicit in our own positions within the domains in which we play (Butler, 1993; Carver & Chambers, 2008).

Cole (2009) and Richard Delgado (in Gillborn, 2008) attribute the start of CRT to the law profession in the 1970s. There was a fear that the civil rights movement in the United States seemed to be stalling. The aim was to concretise the reality of racism in the minds of those who continued to be blind and indifferent to the plight of Black people. Cole (2017:89) gives me the assurance of that thinking there is an inter-relatedness of "institutional racism" as a concept which needs to be contextualised in "reference to economic and political factors related to developments and changes, historically and contemporaneously, in national, continent-wide and global capitalism". So it needs to be dealt with as also affecting all areas of academia.

The CRT framework allows me to investigate what happens between the individual and the racial/class/gender boundaries impounded by structural and cultural rules. Arriving at an Intersectional Feminist Theory means adapting the overarching framework to suit the uniqueness of my research.

3.7 Contextual understanding of concepts

Higher education research has a widely accepted Northern/Western notion of what research should be, by design, method and epistemological forte. The theoretical underpinnings even of Social Realist Theory (Archer, 2008; Elder-Vass, 2015) cannot be blindly applied to the African-American, African (Fanon, 1964; Freire, 2001) and South African context. Being highly contextual and subjective (McCoy, 2005), however, is what makes this research extend the borders of any compact paradigm (Lather, 2006).

CRT and Intersectional Feminism claim that critical theory and feminist theories cannot argue for equity if they do not address the issues of everyone (Evans-Winters, Esposito & Esposito, 2010; Cole, 2017). In South Africa, these privileges relate to and connect economics and education. A society which almost boundlessly privileges one group while categorically limiting other groups, requires a framework which is adaptable by researchers to various levels of criticisms (Essed & Goldberg, 2001; Donoghue *et al.*, 2018). The interlinking, cultural and psychological effects in education, positionality in society, are uniquely experienced by all Black women and Black girls (Evans-Winters *et al.*, 2010; Ahmed, 2014). These different experiences of living so removed from each other in the

same country have an impact on our diabolical understandings of similar concepts of privilege and poverty, racism and race, equality and equity.

Economic, social, gender and educational oppression are inextricably linked (Freire, 2001), and successful forms of structural pressure (Iskander & Rustom, 2010) maintain the hierarchical power of one over another. The deep entrenchment of these oppressions are often misrecognised and denied for its near-permanence. Those who enjoy the spoils of power argue that the marginalised who fail economically and educationally are lazy or unintelligent. The privileged describe themselves as having an innate talent to succeed and deny that anything had been given to them (Pease, 2010; Di'Angelo & Sensoy, 2012).

The contextual factors towards deciding or developing the framework and methodology to counter or critique the notions can thus not be adequate without considering the contextual elements (Essed & Goldberg, 2001; Walton, 2018). The combined contextual elements of being an under-represented, misrepresented Black woman academic, with a largely unrecorded history, adds a unique strain to understanding the defining concepts used in this research (Muthukrishna, 2008; Mckenna, 2012a; de Oliveira Andreotti *et al.*, 2015). Memories and histories of events from a Black woman's perspective, which played out during a specific period of time in South Africa, are trapped underground. This adds to the history of not being acknowledged and being taught by society and culture that we need not be acknowledged. Concepts become generalised in their descriptions of mere universal meanings. When addressing the influences on specific individual lives, however, these concepts necessarily need to be loaded with contextual meaning.

Collins (2000) says it had been the purpose of our oppression with low educational and economic offerings to keep us in place. This is the same as the intentions of Apartheid. How then does one account for the dreams and "desire" to be educated, despite the anxiety of failing we are meant to carry with us? (Mirza, 2009; Nathan and Scobell, 2012a) Colonial governments, intending to oppress Black people, as with the Apartheid government, meant for the oppressed only to be taught as much as would serve the colonial purpose (Fanon, 1964). By their neglect of the well-being of their subjects they became unaware, until it was too late, that education and revolution was happening in the homes of some Black families. In *A Dying Colonialism,* Fanon (1965: 145) warns that thinking of oppressed people as having "native psychology" and "basic personality" is a grave error in judgement on the part of the colonisers. The "educational desire" (Mirza, 2009) messaging some of us

received from those who loved us most was, as bell hooks (2008:42) describes in *Belonging: A Culture of Place*:

> *Even though the men and women in my family history farmed, living off the land, I was not raised to be a farmer or a farmer's wife…The hard down dirty work… would not determine my way of life. My destiny, the old folks constantly told me, was different.*

3.8 The complexities of intersectionality

> *I am a woman. I am a woman of colour. I am a woman of colour of working class background. I am a woman of colour of working class background who is now educated. I am now considered middle class but I am still a woman of colour. I am a woman of colour who stands out because I have shifted and I do not conform. – Shifting Sands by Jean Farmer*

Yuval-Davis (2006) says that our interpersonal relationships are affected by our early feelings of being accepted or excluded from certain groups.

In many ways, the identities as a racialised, gendered women has been enforced upon me and others by a regime and a culture within South Africa.

Feeling that there were persons interested in my success helped me along the way. My lecturers made me feel that it was possible for someone like me to achieve academically. But that was at that particular institution with those liberal white thinkers. They did not necessarily prepare me for the culture I would encounter in academia elsewhere. Levels of belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2006) are inter-related and construed as:

i. social locations – racial, gender and class grouping which are also linked to various intricate power relations.
ii. individual identification and emotional attachments – these are the stories we tell others about who we are or who we are not. These descriptions may be merely perceptions but are real to the narrator and extremely relevant to an individual trajectory.
iii. ethical and political value – how our connections are valued and judged.

The biographic narratives of women of colour which follow in this study tell of different trajectories and how the intersections of their lives have seen them to their current contexts. Being outliers in higher education often also means becoming outliers in the culture we come from. Becoming in a new space is important to our goals and sense of achievement but often it estranges us from where we previously belonged – rendering us elite as we cross spatial-temporal lines. Fanon (1964, 1965) states that resistance is not just outward against

politics and culture. We also have to fight against ourselves and not become complacent in our idea of achievements which appease the colonialists.

Crenshaw (1991:1241) recognises the challenge of conflation and ignoring "intra-group differences". She notes that because Black women overlap on so many identities and cultures, it is difficult to express and have it understood that there are multiple and often indescribable issues. It is the combination of an assortment of possible issues as well as the fact that they are unnamed that makes the experiences and descriptions thereof more complex. There are international issues for Black women in the United States (Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001) as well as in the United Kingdom (White, 2008), but some of the issues remain specific to micro-contexts.

Addressing issues of structure and culture in the global and South African HEIs is often seen as an assault on the foundation of the institution. When outsiders become insiders (hooks, 1984, DeLeon, 2010), allowing the most othered into the centre was not going to happen by changing of policies. This challenge is not unique to South Africa, to the extent that a whole intersectional feminist theory had to develop notions in the minds of everyone involved, including Black women, that they are worthy of space. However, it seems that the onus of opening these conversations in the various contexts always remains with the Black incumbents. Balfour *et al.*'s (2011:199) report on changes in educational research in South Africa indicates a change in higher education and the research coming to the fore post-Apartheid. What seems to be a promising "discourse turn" compared to:

> *...only a small proportion of research that reflects on the intellectual endeavour of postgraduate education. Such reflection in the context of South Africa finds that the preponderance of case study research produced in the first decade of democracy has its antecedents partly in a generation of researchers that frowned on empirical large-scale research and thus foreclosed on its other possibilities.*

The report shows that increased exposure in higher education to "alternate" experiences will challenge what is "normative", but it remains unsure as to how this impacts on policy changes towards equity in our institutions or government (Balfour & Moletsane, 2011). Institutions, in addressing continuous issues of marginalisation, will need to recognise both community and individual narratives and be "guided to social consciousness" which offers a holistic view of their context. Both need to be encouraged because it is often assumed that,

if only one complaint is lodged, that is the only issue or only the one complaining is experiencing a problem.

hooks (2008, 2013) notes that we cannot expect political consciousness to be found, or grow, from any particular source or strand. This leads on to realising the importance of considering the South African context and the experiences of the South African individuals of what is shared and what is unique, what works and what does not. The narrative of the African Black woman is uncommon as she has been silenced and practiced also in silencing herself. Opening a medium for a voice to which those habitually in power are not accustomed is one way of inviting dissent, especially within higher education, as it is a novel voice developing a new way of research. Therein lies the difficulty of framing autoethnography by Western 'academic' standards.

Arguing the *he said she said* perceptions of narratives is to start a process without an end. For this reason, it is important to remember that autoethnography is framed by the experiences of the narrator within the power play. As I understand it, what autoethnography is not, is an opportunity for anyone to counter that narrative with their own. If someone wants to write an opposing story, that is another narrative, which is in any case probably already told in the history books.

Decolonisation/deconstruction/dismantling the Eurocentricity of higher education cannot occur before knowing the constraints which need to be eliminated and what enablers we need to maintain and encourage. Transferring theories and practices from one context may prove inadequate in another context. Imposing Western feminist notions blindly will not address the African or "othered" issues. Failing recognise contextualised literature or thinking of African women, is another way of demeaning our experiences. There cannot be the expectation that South African feminists experience or feel the same as their Western or Northern counterparts. It is also often assumed that all African intersectional concerns are shared by variety or measure and that African women are powerless in negotiating, addressing and changing their conditions (Chilisa & Nteane, 2010). The enablers and constraints may not only be context-specific but also specific to individual perception. Autoethnography is one point of departure towards deciphering and developing models for access, belonging and success of the marginalised.

Individual experiences of entering what was known to be an unwelcome culture (Black women academics in previously white male domains) therefore need transformative theories. Alfred (2001:108, 121, 113) found that while "race, culture, and identity play a vital role in the career development of minority professionals" the way in which these women "accessed the power of their bicultural life structure" is dependent on the individual as well as the "organizational cultures". The support and opportunities offered in the institutional context for South African academics has been shown to be imperative for professional growth (Herman, 2015), irrespective of whether it is a previously disadvantaged or advantaged institution (Leibowitz *et al.,* 2014). The macro-, meso- and micro-interactions have an impact on how academics experience institutional culture (Leibowitz, Bozalek, van Schalkwyk & Winberg, 2014:315):

> *Whilst there is no one to one, predictive relationship between university type and outcome, there is a sense that socio-economic contextual features are salient and require greater attention than other features.*

The quote above does not necessarily imply that the better resourced institutions or HWUs offer more opportunities for academic growth than the under-resourced institutions. It suggests that the challenges presented by these differing institutions differ and have to be considered in how graduates et cetera are viewed. Interplay in the various contexts are dependent on various contextual features as well as agency brought into play by individual academics. These are "reciprocal" relationships between individual and institution (Roxa, 2015:1). This contextual framework emphasises themes from current and past contexts as remembered by individual women. The exploration of events, our own actions and reactions to certain events, as well as the impact on their lives which they may have previously held close to their hearts or have not expressed or investigated previously, make this a unique study. A contextual study allows for an in-depth discussion of the individual sense of agency and identity within a culture of family, society and workplace (Yuval-Davis, 2010; McKenna, 2016). Often previous studies have neglected the processes of interplay between individual and closer context, rather concentrating on structural and group interplay.

The shape of the research kept changing as the story deepened as the assortment of identity issues became relevant from my and others' experiences. Authors on identity recognise the impact of society on our sense of social identity as racial, classed and gendered (Butler, 2005; hooks, 2006; Mirza, 2009). For such personal research a more adaptable framework

was required which allowed the added dimensions of being. An understanding of identity in relation to, and opposite to, others is as important socially as it is in higher education research and work groups (McCoy, 2005; Yuval-Davis, 2006).

Ignoring the context of the concepts used in building theory is to deny societal influence on the meaning of words for individuals (Maton, 2013). Dictionary meanings take on additional meanings related to individual experiences. Colonial dictionaries, such as Oxford Dictionary and Webster Dictionary, seldom relay the meanings taken on in African contexts. The context of this co-narrative autoethnography has determined the conceptual framework for the thesis while the concepts' meanings in turn are determined by the contexts. The determinants of the framework for this study cannot be addressed without taking the contextual issues within South Africa into consideration. The joint context of South Africa's history and present, HEIs, women of colour, et cetera, help in defining the concepts for the specific area of research. Memories of events which played out during a specific period in South Africa are as trapped between simple things like the streets we lived in, the schools we attended and the beaches we visited. Concepts are merely the words used to describe a notion and have universal meanings. When addressing the influences on specific individual lives, however, these concepts become laden with contextual meaning. Barsalou (1982) explains that concepts can be context-independent (low diagnosticity – true of many things) or context-dependent (high diagnosticity – true of one or a limited number of things). Hearing other people's stories informed me that "childhood playtime" and "desire for education" and "sense of belonging" meant completely different things to us and that we reached the same goal by the same frame of mind.

Trahar (2009) explains the importance of critical analysis for identifying the cultural discourses underlying our narratives. Separating these discourses out of the narratives to build the framework provides the main concepts or themes occurring and recurring from our stories. This chapter deals chronologically with the concepts and contexts from our narratives of childhood experiences and then within the concepts and contexts of higher education institutional experiences.

Merriam (2009:72) says that the aim is to be filling gaps in the literature and "advancing, refining or revising, what is already known". With grounded theory, the framework is expanded and the margins deconstructed beyond the current literature to which it is

connected (Rocco & Plakhotnik, 2009). Below is the research process of the thesis adapted from Creswell (Chapter 13, 2011):

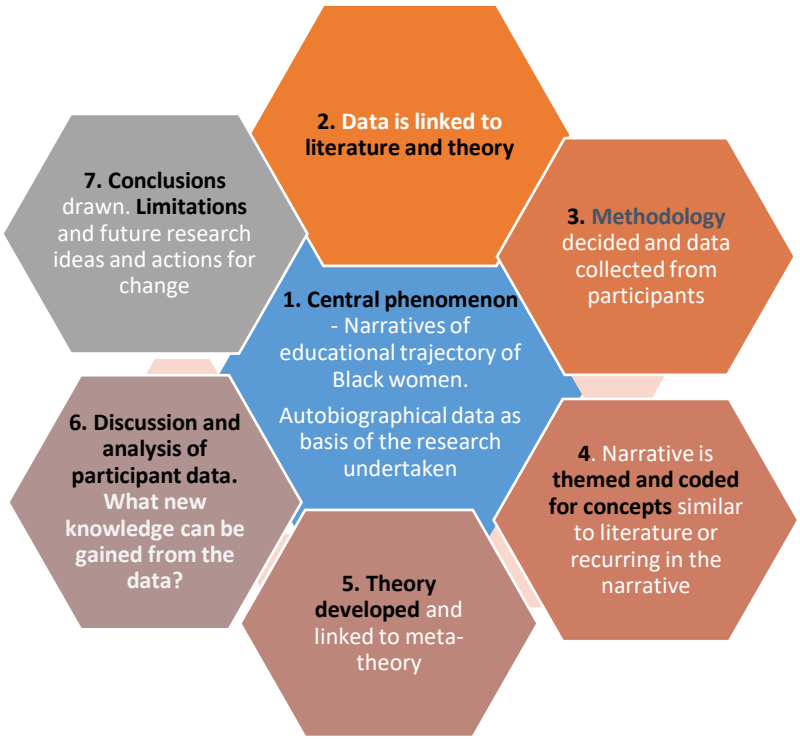


Figure 3.8.1Research process

Shared experiences, as told from narrative data, is ideally suited to the flexible nature of constructivist theory where subjectivity and context are taken into account. Issues of racism, sexism and patriarchy are known to those who suffer under it as well as those who are in positions of power. How we experience the "knowledge" is the reality which intersectionality centres (Bailey & Cuomo, 2008). Intersectional feminist theory demands that specific contextual factors, as well as highly individualised experiences, be accounted for within social constructs of various communities and sectors.

A gelling of similar or dissident voices is more powerful than individualised calls for change which is not done at the expense of acknowledging individual experiences. A sense of community is built out of individuals with some similarities being heard even if their narratives differ. This would require more acute considerations than social meta-theories allow. Intersectional considerations should affect the analyses of every aspect where there is a nexus of classism, sexism and racism (Crenshaw cited in Bailey & Cuomo, 2008:280). The "dynamics of structural intersectionality" can be observed where gender, race and class are further constraints to an individual attaining safety from abuse to education.

3.9 Chapter summary

The theoretical approaches and application were explained as I developed and adapted them to specifically fit the narrative analysis of the trajectories of Black women. Critical Race Theory and Intersectional Feminist Theories are about critiquing issues from a social justice. The status quo of the valued research practices in higher education were critiqued. This was done to explain why radical research adaptation is necessary for us to move towards a transformed society. There are challenges in developing a framework for new and unknown research to be recognised. I presented this theoretical approach on the platform out of my experience as a phenomenon (professional Black woman with a voice) in an established culture (higher education). This was to show readers that the underlying theories are from known research theories which I have deliberately critiqued. It shows that, as new incumbents enter a society taking up roles to shift the academy, adaptations should be acceptable and encouraged.

Chapter Four follows in this vein to show how the research design was developed out of popular means and the adapted to form the methodology for data collection.

Chapter Four

Methodology and Research Methods

> *Back and forth autoethnographers gaze: First they look through an ethnographic wide angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experiences; then, they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations. As they zoom backward and forward, inward and outward, distinctions between the personal and the cultural become blurred, sometimes beyond distinct recognition. (Ellis, 2004:25)*

4.1 Introduction

The quote above is important to understanding how this chapter draws a description of the design and methods used in this research. My philosophy is that telling one's own story reveals the self to the self and allows first-hand interrogation of our interactions with our world. Moving back and forth between past and present, outside and inside and asking for the reasons I react and interact in the manner that I do. My aim is to investigate Black women academics' interactions with the world and to open an interpretive investigation of our multiple and differently constructed realities. I advance with the notion that our actions, reactions and interaction are influenced by our past experiences, consciously recalled or not. We are taught from a young age that these are always considered responses aimed at social acceptability, to maintain order and peace. We speak to ourselves in a unique language about how to best act in society. Qualitative research falls within broad arenas and data collection can be unstructured use of observations, interviews, drawings, journals and memories. All of these have meaning to the qualitative researcher in search of reasons and meanings and to develop her own theory to understand and provide recommendations for a societal problem.

My basic research questions are researched on the Why-axis.

iv) How do South African Black women academics experience and account for the interplay between self and South African HEIs contexts?
v) How do they respond to these within their contexts?
vi) What do Black women perceive as factors that influence their experiences and interplay?

Black women are under-represented in senior academic positions in SA HEIs… Why?

Black women struggle academically… Why?

Black women do not complete their postgraduate studies… Why?

When Black women do graduate in postgraduate studies, they take up jobs in the private sector… Why?

Black women do not feel welcomed by institutional culture… Why?

Institutional culture does not accommodate Black women… Why?

White women and Black men have advanced at a faster pace than Black women… Why?

4.2 Philosophy of the research methodology

Autoethnography is a political act on the part of the researcher. Collecting empirical evidence of experiences within, while being a member of that culture, is an opportunity for change. It affords the opportunity to understand how individuals can achieve transformational success and possibly shift structures, however slightly.

> *We should be careful to note that the colonial world never really conformed to the simple two-part division of this dialectical structure….Reality always presents proliferating multiplicities…. Reality is not dialectical, colonialism is. (Hardt & Negri, 2000:128, emphasis in the original as quoted in Lather, 2006)*

Qualitative research holds varying degrees of critique. If I were to place mine on a scale, I would call it necessarily disruptive and on the very opposite side of mildly critical. Being disruptive places the researcher and the institution in positions of discomfort and both are then somewhat transformed (Leibowitz *et al.*, 2010; Mckenna, 2012a; Blalock & Akehi, 2017). As the Black woman subject, I hold the power over telling my version of myself in and of society when I am expected to be quiet or acquiescent (Maylor, 2009; Blalock & Akehi, 2017). While I may hold this narrative, it remains open to critique by anyone from those who hold institutional authority to those who are afraid of offending the fragilities of other races. While silence serves an authority in going unchallenged, every authority should be open to interrogation and enforced silence is a form of torture (Pillay, 2015; Sue, 2015). However, interpretations of experiences and events cannot be denied as these are views on reality. The colonial project attempted to deny interpretations by instilling fear and it remained successful for centuries. There will forever be a struggle to be relevant, bemoan the lack of diversity at certain levels of employment, if we do not write the "new" narratives. For this reason, many decolonised societies are still prisoner to the colonisers' notions,

making a transformed society seem like a pipe dream and making it difficult for voices of dissent. HEIs are microcosms of a colonial institution harbouring those who wish to hold on to their colonial power as well as those who demand that the culture and structures be transformed. Gergen and Gergen (2002) share the idea that autoethnographers are exempt from dated notions that academic writing must follow a particular form, methodology and method. Dissonance may be expected even at institutions which promise to welcome critical thinking and new ways of doing. The reader responds to the individual relaying the narrative, who is the autoethnographic researcher (Gergen & Gergen, 2002). Just so, the researcher should respond to the voice of the interviewed participant and the institution to the researcher.

What underlies my worldview is changeable as I learn through new experiences. What had started with a positivist, singular view of success has shifted to wider gaze. My view now includes a range of possible outcomes because of understanding the influence of enablers, constraints and agency. Growth is denoted by a willingness to become informed to multiple viewpoints (Said, 1975; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). My own research process and understanding, an exploration, is laid out below:

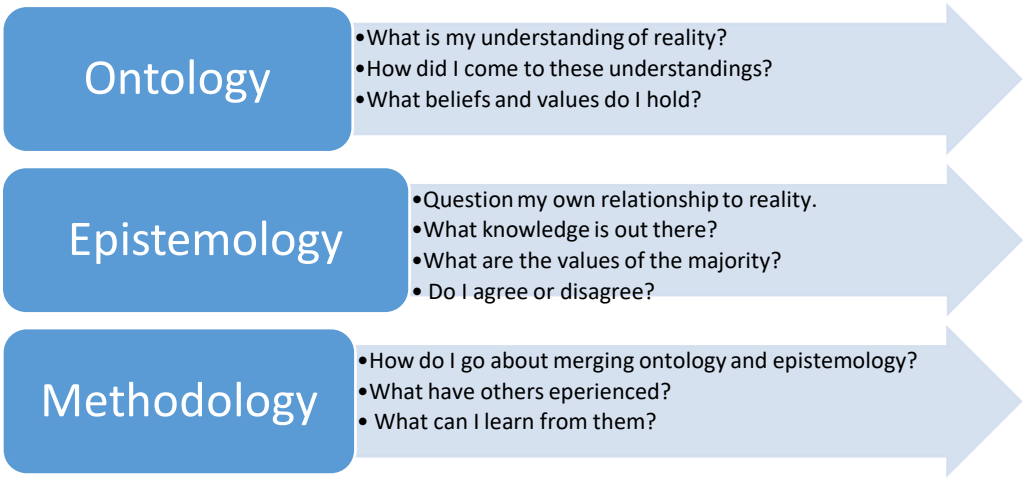


Figure 4.2.1:Exploring own understadning

4.2.1 Assumption versus multiple reality

The literature review indicated that Black women, whether in academia or any other domain, face challenges which others people do not. Few, like mine and those revealed in the literature, have the means or the opportunities to have their narrative recorded or heard. In finding methods to tell the stories of some Black women, we do not tell the stories of

every one, but can concentrate on the similarities and raise awareness that other stories exist. The intention is to open the space for the non-dominant voices and include them in the discourse. Each of us may have a discourse which we firmly believe in because our ideas have not been challenged. These are also called "paradigms" and these shift as we are influenced by the external world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Donoghue *et al.*, 2018). These experiences can be transformative as we learn about the world beyond our own understanding (Stetsenko, 2008; Jones, Kim & Skendall, 2012).

Freeman (in Bamberg & Andrews, 2004:5) states that "narrative 're- serves,' untold and unwritten stories, cultural as well as personal, that are in important respects constitutive of experience. Narratives are part of our deep memory, which is itself comprised, in part, of sedimented layers of history."

In the process of critiquing our role and society's expectations, we find new ways of doing research and developing "context-sensitive theories" and methodologies to address the issues (Wenger-Trayner, 2013). Examining the lived experiences of a few individuals offers shared as well as new lenses with which to view the socio-cultural world. In this case it offers to build a theory through the overlap of lenses of the perpetually "othered" – Black women (Pratt-Clarke, 2010).

Autoethnography as a methodology still needs to be defended even in the social sciences (Chang, 2007; Hughes, Pennington & Makris, 2015). For this, autoethnography in intersectional research is about accepting that "academic faculties" need to be opened up to Black women academics' research. Intersectional research is an examination process of "both an analytical framework and a complex of social practices" (Hancock, 2016) to investigate what influences those who seem not to belong. Furthermore, applying the methodology of autoethnography is to search for responses to the questions of "so what?" and "now what" once we have identified the influences.

Social sciences have the responsibility to be deeply critical of self and society and all of the micro-, meso- and macro-interplay which allows such a society to continue the status quo. The purpose of the social sciences should then be to not only recognise but to challenge and change the constraints for those who suffer most and receive least within this status quo. The goal of social research should be an emergent process and we require particular "strategies" to make change a reality (Maslow, 1943; Biggs, Rhode, Archibald, Kunene, Shingirirai, Nkuna, Ocholla & Phadima, 2015).

This means that it is also deeply, if not obviously, political. Every scientist falls within the range of being unconsciously political in their stance to being outright revolutionary in their research. Ellis' quote above explains aptly how autoethnography offers commentary on self and social, the interplay and the constant shift between critiquing the individual and the context. Unlike ethnography, autoethnographers do not pretend to be anything other than subjective, but rather acknowledge a high level of subjectivity in their research.

Arguing for objectivity "has often resulted in research that was detrimental to social justice" and thwart efforts to decolonise research at our institutions (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006:ix, 253). I have stated that feminist theorists cannot "choose" their projects of social justice without the objectivity of statistical records (Lather, 2006). The debate that real research is always objective, however, allows some researchers to detach from the responsibility of listening to opposing narratives (Mizzi, 2010; Lourens, 2016; Carolissen & Kiguwa, 2018b). Social research is made legitimate by our own interest and investment in the knowledge we access and can possibly produce from our research of our own histories which have not been recorded (Nunley, 2009; Maton & Moore, 2010). This notion is not accepted by the conservative higher education academics who claim to be concerned with "lowering educational standards" in allowing new methods (Lather, 2013).

These notions of subjectivity, leading to necessary social change, are also the underlying theories around issues of race, class and gender so that those marginalised sectors of a community may be recognised and progress (Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Morandi, 2010; Kahn, Qualter & Young, 2012). The rise of voices of Black women in the academic field is one such area of research which aims to see an emergence take place (Mabokela & Magubane, 2004; Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Nunley, 2009; Divala, 2014; Farmer, 2018). Our progress needs to be acknowledged through the constraints and recognition of the enablers we have found, even in our poor and undereducated communities, and eliciting our "tacit knowledge" (Mngoma, 1997; Eraut, 2000; Schwartz *et al.*, 2005; Clandinin *et al.*, 2006; Anderson *et al.*, 2016; Henkeman, 2016c).

Only once Black women in the academe can justify our subjective, self-interest work to ourselves, can we start to educate others about the misconceptions about our actions, our trajectories and our desires (Daniels, 2010).

> *The difficulties of removing the blindfolds should not be minimized. The political spectacle has allowed the seeds*

> *of misperception to be planted deep within the collective subconscious.(Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006)*

This autoethnography represents not only a marginalised and political commentary on the past and the present in HE in South Africa, but it is also a legitimate strain of history and current occurrences. It exposes and offers opportunities for the institutions to identify where Black girls and women are still largely excluded (Evans-winters *et al.*, 2010; Martin & Kamberelis, 2013; Carolissen & Kiguwa, 2018; Neal-Jackson, 2018). Autoethnography is where I find acknowledgement within the intersectional theory for those narratives which exist but have not yet been told. It is in direct opposition to "objective" ethnographers, selective historians and quantitative researchers who tell other people's stories. Intersectional recognition of the other must cross gender, "racial or ethnic boundaries, geographic boundaries and intellectual disciplines" (Hancock, 2016:78). When I argue that Standpoint Theory is a beginning stance for Black women, I do so with the recognition that the boundaries should be crossed to at least acknowledge another view and experience must be recognised as valuable lest we suffer from knowledge blindness (Hancock, 2016:86). Autoethnography, and participatory ethnography, mirror the notion that "multiplicities of subjectivity and identity", ways of learning and possible recognition of all "the potential categories of new knowers are hypothetically endless" (Maton, 2010). Qualitative research is not always counter-narrative or radical but when unexpected people speak out, it always is (Salem, 2016). Standpoint theory and Intersectional studies legitimise narrative as a means by which to analyse experiences without ignoring that there are others in similar positions, but for various reasons have a different view of reality.

The figure below explains a way to was inspired by a discussion with a colleague from our centre who had completed her doctorate on "care-full university" two years earlier (Herman, 2015). She stated that research is relevant when its depth is mirrored by its height. I adapted these reflective and reflected triangles to explain the pattern of my own reflection and this research.

i) The base of the top triangle shows the response to the question in the broader top of the bottom triangle, *What (happened)?* This response is the *autobiographical detail* or the narrative data (method) which describes experiences and how this data was collected (methodology). These two sections make up the *empirical* (Hughes, 2008a; Yuval-Davis, 2010; Anderson *et al.*, 2016).

ii) The second section of the top triangle responds in turn to the question in the second section in the bottom triangle, *So what?* The application of a theoretical perspective which transforms autobiography to autoethnography explains why it was important for this data to be gathered. The process of analysing the data is to identify influencing factors such as enablers and constraints. A deeper reflection and sense-making occurs in autoethnographic skill as the researcher looks beyond describing experiences to how these relate to the society she operates in (Ellis, 2004; Hughes *et al.*, 2015). These sections depict what are "actual" effects of experiences, i.e., how factors such as poverty, skin tone, level of education as well as others' perceptions and prejudices actually impact on the narrator's life. Being a Black woman affects a person's life both daily and longer-term. These cannot be fully realised by white women and men (Denzin, 1997; Nathan and Scobell, 2012a). People seldom share exact opinions and beliefs. Apartheid has further skewed white and Black people with opposing sets of politics and dogma, and thus interpretations of each other's experiences (Anderson, 2006).

iii) The triangles in the third (highest and lowest) sections of the mirror images is how this research attempts to offer means of addressing the issues/disputes/problems encountered in our institutions around Black women academics' experiences and perceptions. The interplay between HEIs, work groups and individuals is obviously problematic if one group of people are not advancing in a desired manner. The depth of this research (lowest section of the triangle? asks, *So what now?* while the highest level and ultimate goal of the research is to demand creation of solutions and make recommendations for change.

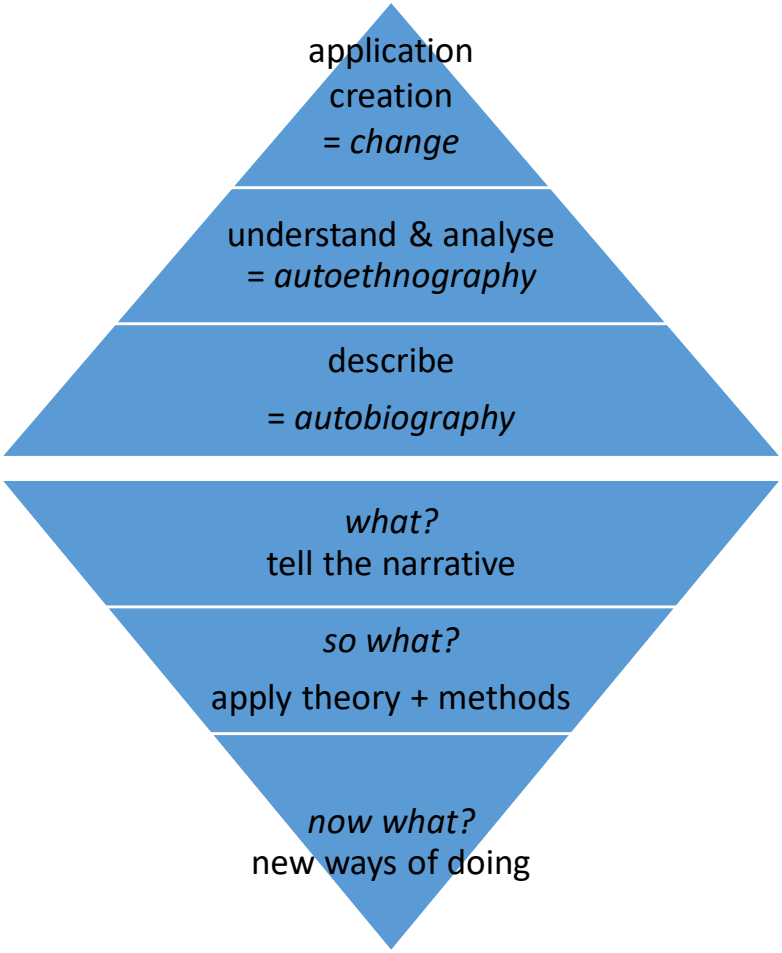


Figure 4.2.2: Reflective process

Autoethnography is one way to centre narratives of the marginalised in academia. For exact understanding I would want to add that the issues raised by the marginalised are confrontations to dominant thinking and thus come up as counter-narratives. It should be remembered that, up to a point, where we come from, our narratives are the norm. When we enter academia, we do not only counter the new space we enter but also the context from which we come. Our narratives are not counter until we come to confront those who are comfortable in a context where we have been present but prejudicially ignored because of the combination of being a woman and Black. To the privileged in the centre, those who do not belong are seldom seen as unique individuals. Autoethnography shows that "we are not all assimilated into one mainstream sameness" (Tierney, 1998:51, 66) and that some of us are less afraid to challenge assumed notions. I would also like my reader to be aware that challenging, being brave, countering the discourse cause anxiety, which is an additional factor in the intersections of our lives.

When Black South African women were eventually also allowed to enter academic spaces of the elite white, we had already been socialised to the notions that these were the best spaces to be in. So in order to maintain our place we assimilate and comply with the foreign rules even when it feels like force-fitting. Only when Black women are in top positions do they understand the inner mechanisms of that which makes it possible to change the structures in HE (Collins, 2000). The conflict, however, is that this insight and aim to transform the organisation can place their jobs in jeopardy. So it is that these new narratives cause discomfort as they are told by the marginalised self. Ladson-Billings and Tate (2006) correctly state that "cultural assimilation" has not been adequately addressed by ideas of constructivist theory, as these ideas prevail as under the guise of diversification and welcoming cultures.

Narrative data, critics argue, cannot be trustworthy because they are not sufficiently objective, but percentages also fail to offer a "good indication of overall change" (Govinder, Zondo & Makgoba, 2013). Govinder *et al.* (2013) offer a varied approach for an equity index, and South African universities may use this for introspection:

> *For example UCT, US and UP with their poor equity scores produce a large proportion of African women doctorates. US, with the worst EIs, produces the most female (mainly White) doctorates in the country.*[26] *However, judging by these poor EIs, the university sector still has a long way to go in resolving the twin challenges of equity and quality.(Govinder et al., 2013:11)*

I argue that subjective data tests evidence at the micro-level interactions (Essed, 1992) and that qualitative and quantitative data swing pendulum-like to keep testing the authenticity of the other. Empirical investigations show the "rational engagement" with the world and the ways to possibly bring about desired outcomes (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The "rational engagement" is not the juxtaposition of the "rational" white male of Bozalek's (2017) description. Rather, I take this to mean a conscious awareness of what was previously unconscious engagement so that we may tackle the world in knowing ways (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006; Maton & Moore, 2010).

4.2.2 Objectivity and subjectivity

The critical researcher gathers data with the intention of examining the dominance and effects of culture and structure within a context in which she operates (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Autoethnography (self-cultural-study), by its very nature, is subjectively motivated,

psychologically discomforting and emotional work (hooks, 1994, 2006). Autoethnography as intersectional feminist methodology delivers critique on the patriarchal structures and cultures of our institutions by raising issues of racial and gendered divisions. Sue (2015:25-26) says that "race [and gender] talk violates the academic protocol" because research sciences attempt to maintain global standard practices which requires dispassionate behaviour. The challenge for situated beings is the wish not to be analysed through the same lenses as everyone else. Objectivity means that we have to assert ourselves as researchers above or be positioned at a distance from our "subjects". Participatory autoethnography is inclusive of researcher and participants and opens an opportunity for social research which participants may not have accessed in their scientific fields.

4.2.3 Interplay on macro-, meso- and micro-levels

HEIs are part of a macro-level national and global body, while much of the professional interaction of the teaching academics happens within the micro-scale work contexts (Trowler, 2008). The study will fulfil the need to examine what happens at the micro-level interactions where individual and institutional academic identities are formed. The micro-interactions which happen at the nexus of the agent and her work environment, i.e., workgroup, department, institutional management, may hold relevant information. Trowler (2008) argues that this is an important site for professional development to take place. The micro-level activities are the operational spaces where individuals experience day-to-day interactions which can make or break their career (Knight & Trowler, 2001; Clegg, 2008). Our narratives relay the experiences of the self as researcher as well as the participants as subjective beings (Merriam, 2009). An important aspect to understanding how our identities and sense of agency are enacted in our interplay in current domains, is understanding the positions assigned to us in our socio-cultural past. As an analysis of my own and participant narratives during Apartheid, I embarked on a critical autoethnography. This is an imperative to attaining a method where everyone can subjectively represent themselves and their perceptions as part of a social context. Intersectional feminist theory is not a mould which fits all the complexities of how our identities develop (Jones *et al.*, 2012; Kahn *et al.*, 2012). Rather, it is a pliable, elastic construct which we can make fit our narratives. The impact of macro- and micro-structural and cultural context on the interplay between agents is how we encounter constraints or enablers. These impacts differ from person to person and from one event to another.

The research methodology adapted over a period of three years as the study shifted from autobiography for a DLit to PhD in Higher Education, using autoethnography. The investigation subsequently led to the exposure to quantitative data which included participants. This methodology satisfies both my initial intended purpose as well as the purpose of a slightly broader social issue, as expressed in the research question. There does not need to be a previously recorded "distinct set" of methods, as social researchers weave together means to an indetermined end (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), but also to open the ends to others. I present a research paradigm of the procedural reflection of the data collection explaining the reasons for each decision (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lather, 2006). In response to the research question, I intended from the start to make a particular social position known, to clarify to a broader community how perceptions influence our work.

Research methodology used to be understood as an objective means of collecting data, using instruments which had been tried, tested and proven to get results. Autobiography would then be too subjective, too personal and appealing to too specific an audience to be considered research in the academic use of the term. Accepted objective scientific methods are often also used to study human nature. Centring personal interest understandably raises the question of the legitimacy of my research (Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2006; Hughes, 2008b). In this lies a request for justification and intent of the research, which is not to "sell" the idea to those who will not be persuaded of its legitimacy, but to convince those who are open to new understandings.

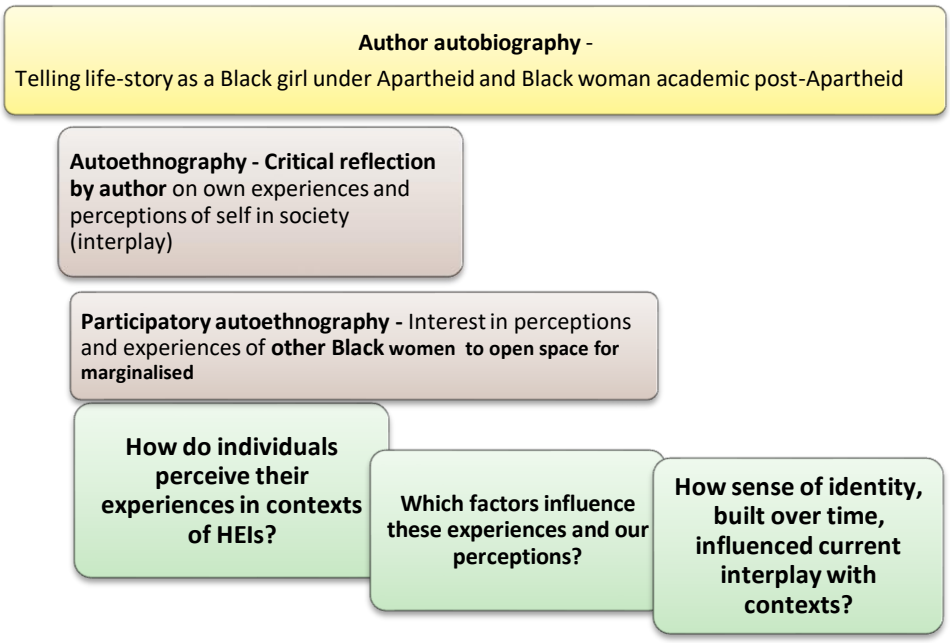


Figure 4.2.3: Legitimacy of my research

4.2.4 Autoethnography

The social justice purpose of autoethnography is multiplied in that it offers critique of self, of culture as well as what is considered elitist research. Autoethnography, while like autobiography, centres on the author but allows her to be a "critically reflexive participant". Positioning "the self in relation to one's community" and making its methods transparent, it offers "challenges to traditional ways of doing and representing research" (Hughes *et al.*, 2015:210).

4.2.3.1 Participatory autoethnography

Despite the similarities, our experiences are also not the same and therefore we *may* use "multiple standpoints" within an "inclusion-based approach" (Hancock, 2016:220). In studies such as participatory autoethnography the groupings merely serve the purpose of showing that all the marginalised suffer, albeit in different ways and varying degrees. Autoethnographic research uses whatever methods gain the best data. Marginalised people should not be expected to assume the ways of the dominant discourses (Hughes, 2008a, 2008b; Saldana, 2013; Hancock, 2016). Those who do not understand cannot relieve our pain, but may listen to the suggested reparations required. I had no idea of the political stances or biases of my participants – I knew only that we shared the elements of identity of being Black women in academia.

Conducting this study effectively meant that I had to investigate further than: "How did you achieve a position in academia?" I needed to find out which of our notions were similar, which were different as well as the reasons that we may view things similarly or differently. I did not want to "force" patterns into the data but rather allow the patterns to emerge or not. The explorative nature of the approach (limited questions) meant that any generalisations I had would minimally affect the data given by the participants.

The inclusion of participants was appropriate for this study in order to show the complexity of interplay in the academic workspace depending on a number of factors, including childhood educational background, involvement in political activism and awareness of self in relation to context.

Every institution has an historical relevance to those who work or study there. South African HEIs in particular have deep political symbolic meaning to people as Apartheid laws

determined who was allowed entry to the various institutions. Context plays an important role in how humans interact, i.e., take initiative, engage in group activities and attitude towards institution. Context is also relevant to sense of belonging which affects other factors of interaction.

4.2.3.2 Power relations within autoethnography

Even with ethical intentions, the retelling of other people's stories cannot ensure that the story is told by the original story-teller. The qualitative researcher should remain aware throughout that there are various power relations at play between self and participants which can be as diverse as in any other community interaction. I take into consideration especially the differential power relations between myself, a Black woman researcher and my Black participants who responded to my call for interviews and having me as the author of their narratives. There are also power relations between myself and white people I may refer to which also forms part of my data.

My life has often felt to me like a sequence of short stories with various characters and I am "embedded" in these, so "multiple vantage points" are valuable in understanding the world around me (Clandinin *et al.*, 2006). Narrative inquiry and autoethnography are methodologies investigating the self in relation to a cultural group to which that self belongs (Hughes *et al.*, 2012). Studying these dynamics can legitimately be considered as educational research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, Ellis & Bochner, 1996). Hierarchies exist where some are obvious and others not, e.g., I have control over how I relay my perception of white colleagues and can argue my stance from my better understanding of my methodology. Another example is that while some of my participants have PhDs, they felt ignorant about responding to my research which is "new" and unknown. An added annotation is that the expected aspect of the researcher/participant hierarchy was reduced because I am Black and the Black participants shared with me what may not have been shared if I had been white or if they had been white.

4.3 Research design

Qualitative data offer what quantitative data cannot; the variables of possibilities can only be presented through qualitative means. Qualitative research, by its critical nature, crosses boundaries from "political right, epistemological right and ethical right" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The research design gives an overview of the methods and choices made to access

the way meaning is made in reaction to the stated research questions. Research design, such as used in this study, is one more way in which critical research "expand[s] the qualitative paradigm", "methods" and "critical research" which can complicate yet empower relationships in academia (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:42). The framework of this research design is malleable and pluralistic, which is important in critical and feminist studies (Lykke, 2010).

This section offers an overview of the methods and my reasoning behind this choice. I realised during my proposal stage that I had to be adaptable in my research design. Having my own autobiography written for DLit, I had to decide which parts of the story would now be relevant to my research within my new context where my occupation changed.

4.3.1 Problem statement of the study

The problem of low representation of Black women in mid to senior positions in HEIs has been explained in previous chapters. Equity and equality throughout the educational sector has been priority on the national agenda since 1994, however, Black girls and women remain marginalised (Divala, 2014; Jansen, 2016). Keeping the contextual influences in mind, the lack of advancement of Black women in higher education is worrisome and begs investigation from various angles. Few studies have offered opportunities for South African Black women academics to tell individual stories of their educational trajectory and to investigate the influences which interplay in their goal of success. Literature on South African Black women's' experiences and perceptions, which does exist, is scant and often not multi-dimensional. This research recognises the need for academia to reflect on factors which enable and constrain Black women.

4.3.2 Research question

The considerations above, and in previous chapters, show the importance of collecting qualitative data by responding to questions properly formulated for the aim of the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Subsidiary questions allow the researcher to gain clarity for herself and the reader and as a reminder to delve deeper into possible underlying factors by repeatedly asking Why?

i) How do South African Black women academics experience and account for the interplay between self and South African HEIs contexts?
ii) How do they respond to these within their contexts?

iii) What do Black women perceive as factors that influence their experiences and interplay?

4.3.3 Scope of the research

This study constitutes a multi-case study of 6 individuals, including the researcher, at different institutions in South Africa. For the sake of confidentiality, pseudonyms are used for all participants except the researcher. Except for the researcher's institution, the other institutions are referred to as HDU (historically disadvantaged institution) and HAI (historically advantaged institution) as the purpose of the study was to understand individual perceptions of enablers and constraints in various institutional contexts. The "events" under investigation are not definitive as the intention was to get a notion of what the participant felt important to include. Before I could attempt to interpret and analyse occurrences for the individuals, I had to afford them the necessary respect and opportunity to reflect on these for themselves. All participants were satisfied with my interpretation.

4.3.4 Target group – participants and institutions

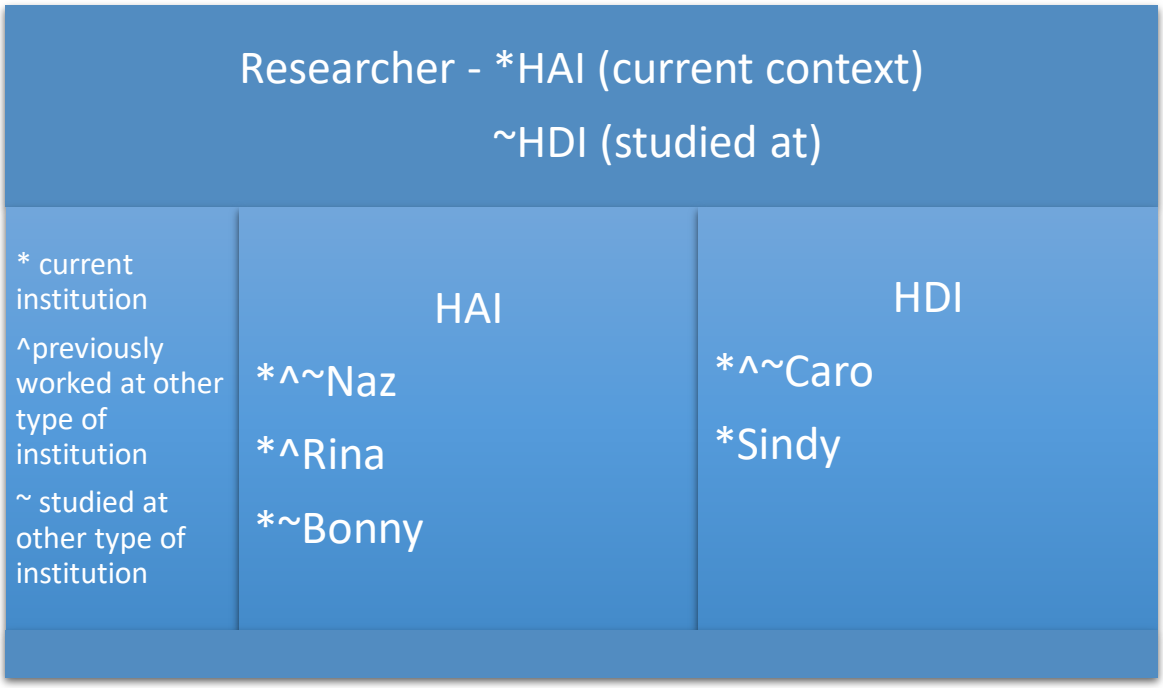


Figure 4.2.4: Participants past and current institutions

4.3.4.1 Comparing narratives

Qualitative data points the research towards notions of causes and effects of interplay and ultimately how to make things better (Stake, 2010). So, while quantitative data can show us

that current policies are ineffective, qualitative data can direct us to identifying and naming the persistent, identifiable but sometimes indescribable cultural and personal discourses and reasons for our interactions.

Participants were South African citizens of similar background, age and professional post-levels as mine. According to Denzin (2018:216), "interpretive autoethnography allows the researcher to take up each person's life in its immediate particularity and to ground the life in its historical moment". Denzin further states the importance of moving back and forth in time because the events which affect individuals happen at the intersection of "structure, history and autobiography".

4.3.4.1.1 Participatory-autoethnography

Statistical data indicate that several years after redress, the same groups of people are still in their previous positions of under-privilege and privilege. Although other sciences claim to be objective, none of the choices we make about our research are made without some level of subjectivity. My argument is that closer, qualitative type investigations will serve as a guide towards meaningful transformation not only for individuals but also for groups left behind (Trahar, 2009; Stephens, 2013). Co-autoethnography (Ellis, 2007; Cann & Demeulenaere, 2013; Leibowitz, Bozalek, Farmer & Farmer, 2017) is one way of drawing others into collaborative work when there are shared interest and the privilege of "enough time" to become involved to this level. However, when other academics do not have the expertise or time, or when a doctoral project needs to be an individual effort, including them as participants could offer them insight into a methodology which may open reflection on a more superficial level. This new knowledge may then be taken up at a later stage or merely add a new way of thinking about experiences and perceptions.

My observations after writing an autobiography on my educational experiences led me to inquire further than my own experiences towards participants within the framework of identity, agency, motivation and enablers. Firstly I questioned *Why are there so few of us when I know of many intelligent Black women?* This led me to question further about *Why these few?*

The inclusion was also to show what others could draw on, but also what was lacking culturally and contextually within our institutions. There are also successful Black women in natural science, medical sciences, economics, law and engineering whose narratives will

not ever be told unless the social sciences' methods are made known. The politics affecting Black women academics are seldom shared because of the load many have to carry within the institutions (Mabokela, 2000).

The inclusion of participants offers the complexity, but also depth, of varied views of the same period of history. An inductive method of analysis is used and the adaptation of other qualitative methods were better suited to my research and to gain access to individual perceptions and knowledge of participants' experiences. Having participants' perceptions affected the conclusions of this study. Saldana (2013:56, 105) says that our world view is negotiated and adjusted by considering the views of those we encounter in our research – and this is no different for the participants we employ in research. While the intention in this research is not (yet) to collaborate, there is the intention to highlight and encourage future participation in working around the concerns affecting marginalised groups in academia.

Relating research to past literature is an essential part of any thesis. However, when little history about Black women in South Africa has ever been recorded, the search extends further afield and we adapt the old and develop our own theories and methods. This study is approached as qualitative and critical research which restructures and repositions certain social critical frames. I have no delusions that this will create immediate, major changes to society. Unlike Fanon and Freire, hooks and Lorde, my audience is not near large enough.

We try to derive meaning from our relations with others. Our experiences are relevant when we focus on individual or small groups' stories that start to represent the marginalised. Context plays a pivotal role in how we experience what is real in the world. Our ontological view is determined by our social interactions and reflecting on these (Merriam, 2009). My understating of racism, sexism, class and privilege are contextually driven as an opposite or other and is thus ontologically different from a white woman of similar age or a Black woman from a close-knit community (Bailey & Cuomo, 2008). Our world is especially "confusing" when we move between "communities" and identities, resisting oppression while voluntarily operating in those domains, says Lugones (Bailey & Cuomo, 2008:69).

As the study is about experiences of structure and culture with regard to race and gender in HEIs, I knew that people's sensitivities would be engaged. The differing perceptions of the topic by different people within the same institutions was something I thought I was

prepared for. I found out that I was not, but I was prepared to stand my ground. The scope of the research shifts across historical periods in our country and in participant's social and temporal spaces. The literature around finding a framework for my research is summed up, for me, in the following by Lather (2006:46):

> *an approach to the teaching of educational research that both moves out of frameworks of competitive paradigms and situates our efforts within contemporary knowledge problematics, regardless of paradigmatic and methodological persuasions.*

Lather goes on to justify working with research which concerns us even if it does not fit into a single or known framework. Such research appeals across disciplines for "what is thinkable and not thinkable in the name of social inquiry in particular historical conjunctions".

I asked that the participants transport themselves to their past and try to determine what they viewed as influencing factors which brought them their interactions in their current positions and contexts. The issues of identity and dominant cultural practices influencing the experiences of marginalised Black women are critiqued in this thesis. That there are obvious and less obvious exclusionary and inclusionary practices based on race and class is the first level of addressing this problem, which has been previously researched (Mirza, 2009; hooks, 2015). Most often those entering a new culture are expected to assimilate and this affects the slow change in the culture of institutions and Black women exercising their voices as academics and teachers (hooks, 2010). The literature about HEIs globally and in South Africa have been critiqued for failing to develop, or being too slow in developing, inclusive cultures, language policies, curricula, methodologies and theories to create accommodating contexts (Carolissen, 2016; Akala & Divala, 2016). The notion of "widening participation" in South African universities is complex on more levels than students and academic staff gaining access to an institution (McKenna, 2012b; Leibowitz *et al.*, 2015). The onus of how issues affecting higher education inclusion and exclusion from a social justice perspective are presented and framed rests on both academics and management, especially in the engagement with those who have been historically excluded.

Factors which continue to enable some while constraining others will continue if we do not begin by acknowledging everyone's capital on an "equal footing" in higher education. These factors range from historically unfair schooling to current HE practices (Bozalek &

Boughey, 2012; Soudien 2010). The aims of this research are to contribute towards developing theories towards identifying and addressing some factors which influence experiences of "others" in higher education; and how the individuals in this research have traversed these to enter the contexts of higher education. While I hope to present possible considerations to those who hold relevant positions as managers for staff development, I also hope to offer areas of consideration for individuals regarding their sense of identity and the influence of interplay between them and various levels within these contexts.

Qualitative data also need to be gathered in such ways as to allow the varied stories to be analysed in that they elicit unique individual evidence. Mere question and answers type quantitative methods will not gain informative data while strict application of theory for analysis will impose preconceived notions upon the data. In this thesis the participants can tell their stories in an almost uninterrupted manner. As seen in this study, a reasonable share of international and national, compelling descriptive work on data collection to support arguments about the challenges of Black women academics exists. The issues become identified and then generalised by being raised over and over. Without evidence from individual testimony as to how these issues are negotiated by individuals' sense of self and agency as they encounter them, we cannot address and change the interplay of the individual and the culture which has become institutionalised in higher education.

In a lecture I attended (NEST, 2014), Mark Freeman (1993) said something which triggered the realisation that we can remain completely unaware of how early childhood disruptions affect the choices we make later in life. Research in psychology shows that some memories are permanently deeply-rooted; we can only recall them with great difficulty or not at all. These memories, as well as the less traumatic ones, can be life-changing occurrences. In listening to others and writing our own stories, we can draw on what has become our tacit knowledge. This knowledge is often under-valued, often dismissed as an untrustworthy sixth sense, and is difficult to express in ways that we or others can understand. We also tend to become "conspirators" in our silencing as society moulds us to not put our feelings of pain to the fore (Sue, 2015). Silence becomes habitual or we remain silent out of fear of reprisal (Cann & Demeulenaere, 2013). Often "unremembered" events, of which we are not conscious, are influential on our present actions and behaviours (Eraut, 2000). It is this which can sometimes be elicited through story-drawing and story-telling of our long-forgotten past. These memories are as important to how we act and what we do in contexts as the formal learning we receive.

An autoethnographic study allows tentative entry into opening a possibility of challenging notions of assimilation of Black and women academics. This space would be where the voice of the marginalised and "othered" can be heard (Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010).

Listening to other women tell of their experiences helped me to realise that experiences and lessons of the same events can be quite different. In order to address the issues raised in the title, the study offers an overview of the historical background of education in South Africa role- played by the events in educational trajectories in the lives and perceptions of the people in South Africa. A critical foregrounding is given of the public institutional policies as well as the unspoken cultural practices around issues of race and gender of people who have historically been limited access to HEIs. As Bhaskar (2013) suggests, one of the tasks of social critical science is to investigate possibilities of viable outcomes for conditions where change may be required. It is then up to researchers to take part in effecting these changes. Looking at current events and the rate of Black women academics succeeding in postgraduate level higher education studies, it is obvious that some redress and intervention is required in order for a paradigm shift to occur.

4.4 Research methods

The methods are adapted from relaying my own experiences and also what was relayed in the literature. Applying an intersectional lens allows a broader understanding of how similarly or differently lives are shaped by gender identity, tone of skin and class. The impact of cultural status, e.g., who belongs in a particular context and who is othered (Collins, 2000; Dill & Zambrana, 2009) becomes clearer with the acknowledgement of the "us" and "them" positions we assign. Empirical data collected using these methods inform the development of the critical theory used in the study. The adapted framework is based on the premise that each person's interpretation of events depends on past experiences, whether consciously recalled or not. The framework allows for an interpretative analysis of the data, where I seek similarities and anomalies in what is often viewed as shared or common trajectories of Black women in South Africa. The process allowed participants' expressions and reflection with few interruptions.

Participatory autoethnography as a methodological approach may give rise to various challenges encountered throughout the process towards an end product. The critical reflexive stance of autoethnography raises issues ranging from personal concerns about emotional vulnerability caused by sharing personal details as well as confronting authority

(Hughes, 2008a; Sue *et al.*, 2009; Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010). In autoethnography the authenticity of such subjective data, as well as the practical value of individual interpretations and its epistemological probabilities about its application in designing courses, may be questioned. Autoethnography challenges notions of who it is who may represent a culture and from which perspective the story of a particular culture holds accuracy. So the difference in responding to the question of enablers and constraints in higher education teaching and learning contexts depends entirely on the representation, and it is my view that neither one nor the other can be denied.

My autobiography and the participant data were collected using a qualitative framework. I used different methods of collection which included an invitational email requesting a response with intent to participate, interview drawing and response and researcher-participant observations.

4.4.1 Invitations and questionnaires

I requested and received the staff records of Black women academics from four institutions. I then sent an invitational email with the title of the research and asked those who were willing to participate to forward the requested biographical data. The data collected included race, age, post-level and number of years working in higher education. These details were relevant to the study which focuses on Apartheid and post-Apartheid education systems (Soudien, 2006, 2007). The racial classification (South African Population Classification Act 1950 – 1991) is relevant here as I wanted to interview only participants who had received an inferior primary and secondary education under Apartheid.

The questionnaire was drawn up in English as this is the *lingua franca* in South African HEIs. I attempted to collect the data in a manner which minimally influenced the participants with my own values, although my experiences limit my understanding and analysis of the data. I make no claim to any generalisations from my questions. Denzin (2014), cited in Landu (2014:2), makes clear that to "develop a methodology" out of individual narrative, the autoethnographer must "examine how the private troubles of individuals are connected to public issues and to public responses to these troubles". The following criteria determined the participants from four institutions:

i. Nationality, race and gender: South African Black (Black African, "coloured" or mixed race, Indian) women.
ii. Junior, mid or senior teaching academic.

iii. Minimum of 3 years working as a teaching academic in current institution.
iv. Availability for 2 one-hour interview opportunities.

4.4.2 Interviews

Interviews were conducted in English and the data collected by means of audio-recorded interviews. While interviews are generally considered to be "question and answer" sessions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), I had no prepared questions. I wanted the participants to speak freely for most of the interview or otherwise conduct the interview as a conversation for those participants who needed cues. My intention was to gather data which the participants felt would be relevant to their educational narrative and which they felt comfortable sharing. Eliciting individuals' perceptions and experiences within their contexts meant that they would be revealing personal details of their lives and I did not want them to feel that I was prying as race, class, family and gender issues may be considered sensitive topics to some people. I realised that potential participants may already be influenced by the topic of my research so I needed to decide the best approach to attaining my research aim. I had to consider the following in preparing for the interviews:

- Given that my participants' mother-tongue could be any of South Africa's 11 official language, I had to consider how this would affect our interactions?
- How to least compromise the data collection process?
- How to avoid leading the participants with my own assumptions of enablers and constraints of social and institutional culture?

I considered, but soon discarded, the idea of focus groups and decided that the approach to collecting the most authentic data would be the more time-consuming route. I knew from my experience with focus group interviews that the issues involved highly personal reflection with possible psychological sensitivities. This made the groups a complex interactive space for all of us to navigate.

Each interview was to be approximately 45 minutes each and, being one-on-one, could be rather intrusive. The drawings could be as simple or intricate as the participants chose them to be. Its purpose was to serve as a catalyst or guide to the participant. I also hoped that it would serve as a constant reference or reminder to participants about what they were thinking about initially – like a brainstorming experience. I wanted a method which would require as little intervention from me as researcher. Drawings can serve as catalysts to guide (Bozalek *et al.*, 2013; Grennan, 2017) and aid the interviewee to speak about her

experiences. Drawings allow for deeper reflection of the situations being described as well as more fluid descriptions. Using drawings as a mode of talking about events or conditions may elicit a spontaneous narration and the participant may experience clearer memory processes.

I opted to use drawings ("river of life" and context map). Having had a similar experience of this method during a workshop, I found that it elicited memories which I otherwise would not have thought particularly relevant to my trajectory to higher education. I had kept my own drawing as it reminded me of how far I had come and what I still hoped to achieve. During my experience, however, I was part of a group and we had only 7 minutes to speak about our drawings and the memories they elicited. I recall how all the members felt that they would have appreciated more time to explain. I felt that I wanted my participants to exhaust their narratives or at least feel that they had revealed what they wanted to.

Interviews usually take the form of questioning by the researcher or interviewer and answering by the interviewed; even when semi-structured or semi-formal it involves a series of questions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Given, 2012). I aimed to pose questions only if necessary i.e. when the participant asked me for a prompt. My response to such requests would be met with "Tell me more about 'what you did/thought/experienced."

My individual experiences have led me to concern for a particular sector of society – the most vulnerable, the most troubled and the most in need of upliftment. In order to dispel the societal assumptions and treatment of Black girls and women, I extract, not role-models, but piece-narratives. Giving "an account of [my]self" I am the "narrative authority" but of a "singular story" which has to take into account that full account of the history, perceptions and people contained in it, cannot be given (Butler, 2005).

While anthropology and ethnographic researchers immerse themselves in another culture, my research started as someone belonging to a group. I started out with the assumption that the participants and I may share elements of socio-political backgrounds and have varying perceptions thereof. Ontologically we make meaning of our constructed reality by offering multiple subjective realities. There is an assumption that epistemologically qualitative researchers have a "close interaction between knower and the known", that there is a "co-creation of reality" and that actions taken are influenced by social and political value and belief systems (Creswell 2013). Creswell (2013) indicates that social constructivism allows

that the researcher and her participants can relay multiplicity of realities through their interactions.

Paradigms	Ontology	Epistemology	Methodology	Aim
Interpretive	• Internal reality of subjective experience	• Empathetic and observer subjectivity	• Interactional • Interpretation • Qualitative	• **Social comment**
Constructivist	• Socially constructed reality • Discourse • Power	• Suspicious • Political • Observer constructing version	• Deconstruction • Textual analysis • Discourse analysis	• **Understand the understated as socio-political**
Critical theory	• Reality is subjective • Truth is many	• Constructed on the basis of issues of power • Based on system of socio-political power • Who is politically marginalised and why?	• Critique (of hegemony) • Revolutionary; own methods • Collaborative discourse analysis	• **Voice of the oppressed is opened up** • **Just(ice) and social change**

Table 4.4.1: Reality as construct

Adapted: Top light grey Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter's (2006) Bottom dark grey Lather (2006)

I have adopted and adapted paradigms to accommodate the notion that reality "consists of a fluid and variable set of social constructions". A paradigm which takes a "suspicious and politicised epistemological stance" allows for deeper questioning of the socio-political discourses. A methodology which allows for numerous narratives around a set of issues plays into the ontology and epistemology of autoethnography where our words are the primary source of the data analysed (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Merriam, 2009). The postmodernist view is that our own reality is internally created and materialises as perceptions. I hold the opinion that autoethnography rather than ethnography is the more trustworthy account of social and cultural experiences. Historically, ethnography developed as a methodology from colonial studies of "othered" ethnic groups as their colonised subjects. "Cultural studies and postcolonial theory" stems from the belief that the subject of colonial studies is necessarily portrayed as "subaltern" and negative or lesser "other" where the researcher often investigates from a position of "cultural power" (Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2006:530). While I believe that "subjective experiences of the external world" influence our

experiences and understanding the world (ontology), I am further convinced that we are motivated to side with stances because these benefit us personally, socially and politically. Because of my past socio-political experiences, there are certain ways in which I will or will not act. Similarly, my research paradigm influences my choice of research process (Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2006:7).

> *The space in between involves a culture-integrative research framework. This is a tapestry, a mosaic of balanced borrowing of less hegemonic Euro-Western knowledge and its democratic and social justice element and combining it with the best of the democratic, laboratory, and social justice essentialized indigenous knowledge and subgroup's knowledges. (Chilisa, 2012:25)*

If our aim in South Africa is to decolonize education, we must make room for varying views gained from varying methodologies to accommodate adaptable Euro-Western paradigms. This does not mean that Euro-Western paradigms are discarded but rather critiqued and contested until those marginalised by these paradigms, based on ethnic group, gender, socioeconomic status, are included.

The notion of analysing the narratives around the question of interplay is supported by researchers who argue that differences in cultural relations within institutions imply that some identify as part of (us) while others feel excluded (them) (Yuval-Davis, 2006, 2010). These differences in experience, social relations and identity influence our perceptions and is the basis of the interplay of Black women academics in their institutional cultures. Whoever feels most marginalised, in this study based on gender and race, as well as possibly class, will experience most challenges in interacting with the culture. This is especially evident in those of us who will not assimilate and accept the status quo (Mirza, 2009; Pratt-Clarke, 2010). Our stories are used to explain how parts of our identity developed or shaped through socio-cultural background and why we respond to our contexts in particular ways (Hernandez *et al.*, 2015).

This self-examination of our interplay is a step in the direction of understanding and changing our contexts. Our social concerns are borne out of our personal and lived experiences (Johns & Marlin, 2010) and our responsibility is to build new theories for knowledge and experiences in which ethnographers have not shared. This form of research creates discomfort for ourselves, but most especially for the dominant and those who benefit most from these notions (Freire & Shor, 1987a).

I have always felt that with everything else I lacked compared to white counterparts, I have had to rely and work on how I identified and not other people's perception of me. It seemed that the only aspect I could control how I perceived myself and others in relation to me. The management of these relationships and perceptions is admittedly also a point of concern because we cannot control how others react towards us. The quest to being and becoming an "insider", "welcomed" and "organically linked with [this] community" (Leibowitz *et al.*, 2013) is largely determined by our interplay with the community. For me it is the individual interplay in her context, to carve a space which is her own, which places an immense burden on Black women. We who are already exhausted in our quest for recognisable academic competence now must aim to re-create theories to fit our own stories in our own words and thus mark it as necessarily subjective (Merriam, 2009).

Ethnography has been understood as "observational work in particular settings" by the researcher immersing herself in another culture for information-gathering (Silverman, 2010:49–51). Coding of data is often done with the researcher's worldview and one critique is that this is often far-removed from the full picture of the view of the culture being researched. Being anthropological, ethnography is the study of "the other" to see how "they" are different or similar to "us" and usually described from the intellectually dominant point of view. These types of studies, such as ethnography, offer relevant background to qualitative methodologies but can be critiqued as lacking authenticity. Broadening the scope of social research and research methodologies is about allowing expression of personal experiences through self-narratives and own analysis.

Autoethnography is more than sharing one individual story. It requires the author to be reflexive, testing her perceptions and the value assigned to her experiences in her context. In the process of ethnographic self-investigation, she learns about her assumptions of others who share her context. Often people who construct personal stories are those who have gone against the grain and do so with a consciousness of being a member of an outside group. Our stories are counter-historical-text-book types. While the position of these stories are as coming in from the margin, we represent, but do not speak on behalf of, nor do we tell the stories for, others. Autobiographic and autoethnographic writing is due to a writer's realisation that history seldom tells a personal narrative.

In this sense, narrative work has a particular attraction for those who are members of "outgroups", or "groups whose marginality defines the boundaries of the mainstream,

whose voice and perspective – whose consciousness – has been suppressed, devalued, and abnormalized" (Delgado, 1995:64 in Bamberg & Andrews, 2004). The stories, or counter-stories, which members of outgroups tell to themselves and others, help to document, and perhaps even validate, a "counter-reality" (Delgado, 1995:64 in Bamberg & Andrews, 2004). In this sense, counter-narratives, like the dominant cultural narratives they challenge, might be experienced, and articulated individually, but nonetheless they have common meanings.

As a Black woman and novice researcher of a certain age and limited experience, I know now that success is not only due to individual effort, neither is the slow progress only accounted for by individual weakness. Individuals are unequally subjected to personality traits and dependant on their contexts. I could take this stance on behalf of at least every other Black woman in academia before I have heard their stories. Critical questions often arise as to the personal bias of the positioning of the self in a qualitative study, and in "traditional paradigms" this would be considered, at best, off course and, at worst, a "capital offence" (Chang, Ngunjiri & Hernandez, 2013). Events described hold my personal concerns, my objectivity is compromised and perception of events skewed towards personal interests. While I maintain my position as author when dealing with descriptions of events as experienced by other participants, an autoethnography is by its nature and intention subjective. I have a dual role as author of this method – that of researcher and participant who turns the lens inward to self and outward to participants and context, being both autoethnographer and ethnographer (Chang *et al.*, 2013). Although my narrative remains the main source of this thesis, I do not use my single narrative as the only source of information. The transcripts of the interviews and the few probing questions posed to the participants by me as interviewer, will attest to the fact that I have attempted to reduce leading the participants in their responses. There are advantages and pitfalls of applying autoethnography as methodology and including others and the self into the story "goes against the grain of much academic discourse" (Denshire, 2013:1).

My reasons for including participants' narratives are twofold: Firstly, as members of my community I employ them to find support for my personal premise that identity as well as external factors influence our trajectories through life. Secondly, to weave together my and other Black women's narratives from our shared temporal space and individual experiences in order to encourage a change in perceptions and considerations about Black women academics. Although not much autoethnographic research is published, even less with this

adapted method, Lather (2006:45, 36) says that the job of educational research is to go about its business in "multiple ways" to get out of its "stuck places" and "trouble tidy binaries".

This autoethnography started out essentially as a personal monograph as I was writing memories of my life story from which I could later create short stories or an autobiography. My intention was to temper the language and sentiments into stories about my life. I wanted others to come as close to feeling what a Black girl (in South Africa) experienced (Ellis, 2007). "[Falling] somewhere between anthropology and literary studies" is precisely where my method started (Denshire, 2013:1). It was a "solo work in creative, evocative and/or analytical [paradigm]" (Chang *et al.,* 2013:536).

One year after starting this memoir, I attended a workshop where I had to draw my "river of life" from childhood to current context and then explain in ten minutes what we had drawn (Bozalek & Biersteker, 2010). I noticed that all the participants, mostly women, in the session would have liked more time to talk about their drawings and the communities in which they find themselves and that they wanted to be heard. As I researched the possibility of doing an autoethnography, I read of research and books authored by such women as Bessie Head, Audre Lorde and bell hooks. Nearly all literary and autobiographic, biographic and ethnographic Black feminist writing I came across were by women from the educational and sociology fields. These writings seemed to share my fundamental views on patriarchy and constraints (hooks 1984, 1994; White, 2008; Mirza, 2011; Yosso, 2005; Collins, 2000).

Bamberg and Andrews (2004) state that offering a narrative as a master narrative allows others to investigate themselves with the master perspective in mind. It is used as a "vehicle" to open other stories: "Wittingly or unwittingly, we become the stories we know, and the master narrative is reproduced" (Murray & Beglar, 2009:30). However, when someone cannot identify with the master narrative and starts to critique it by comparison, these new authors are seen as "deviances" to the norm.

My drawing and my story turned out to be a critique of the structures and cultures which defined my past and current contexts. There was to my story more than just a relay. On revisiting my narrative, I realised that I recalled foremost what had affected me most from both childhood and adulthood. Theorising from this perspective, I had to decide which parts of my story were relevant to my practice. I centred the rest of the ethnographic inquiry of the participants around their educational trajectories and what stood out for them in their journeys (Ramrathan, 2010). Analysis of the text would certainly add to depth of

understanding for myself and for the reader (Anderson, 2006). Commentary on the social and cultural is always political (Collins, 2000). In my case my story and research centre around race and feminist intersectional issues in my educational trajectory, however, the practice is to choose from one's own writing what is essential to the task at hand, such as career trajectory (Hayes, 2015). I wanted to write about my life in such a way that it could be shown how events can be structured in a way to deliberately defer one from the best future possibilities. It turned out that it was also about how those intentions can be countered. Autoethnography is still always a personal comment on our social or cultural interactions (Ellis, 2004). I aimed to be careful as I did not want it to be perceived as messaging, "if I could, you can". I would much rather state, "I did this because of..." and pose a question of, "What can you tell from another perspective?"

Narrators portray their own reality and choose themes which have stood out for them in a particular time and space. Our anticipation and perceptions of situations which require us to be brave are from our past experiences of who holds authority within our society. While I had often challenged authority when I felt that I or others were treated unfairly, it does not mean that I felt any less anxious than people who felt the same but chose not to. Similarly, I think that situations where we assume we can act in directing or condescending manner, stems from experiences or examples set for us. When on two separate occasions two white colleagues feel that they may reprimand instead of discussing with me as a newly-appointed colleague and I call them out on it I do not call it racism, but I think it. I called a meeting with them and they apologised. When one of these same colleagues repeats her behaviour with another Black colleague, a few months later and then with another two years later, this is definitely racism. When the other colleague repeats this with every new colleague, irrespective of race, this is an authoritative style of management, still in need of address. I realise that the challenges of working with perceptions are huge.

Incorporating other narratives offered a distance and some objectivity and differentiation about the ways in which constraints were overcome. It also helped me to realise that I did not always achieve by my skills alone but by other enabling factors present, but previously unrecognisable, in my environment (Ellis & Bocher, 2000). The awareness of who is being "othered" in a shared context is imperative to addressing the "embedded social inequalities" encouraged by the previous government (Naicker, 2008). This, however, requires an acknowledgement that privilege and disadvantage still exist within the structure and culture of our institutions.

When one feels compelled to comment on political issues, it most often turns out to be more than that. It becomes a critique of society aimed at informing oneself as well as one's audience; the outcome can be criticism while the aim often turns towards bringing about a way of thinking of change (Yosso, 2005). As women of colour in extraordinary positions, Black women academics challenge the status of white institutional dominance, and our presence enforces alternate thinking to bring about change (Crenshaw, 1991; White, 2008; Collins, 2000). Arguing in favour of the value of our positionality, knowledge and experience, with having less cultural capital, was never going to be an easy task. Reality is not a shared thing, but certain aspects of culture and events need to be acknowledged as that which connect us to each other (Chang, 2008).

The higher education contexts and events described in this thesis, and how individuals' interactions are influenced by past events, are my and participants' interpretations. Educational research and social research which investigate the meanings we attach to our interactions with our social world highlight what meanings individuals assign to their experiences of events (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The real world exists outside of our perceptions and it is our perceptions which make up our learning experiences and influence our interactions (Maxwell, 2012). The overlap which exists between the educational and social disciplines allows a range of methodological practices depending on what the researcher wishes to highlight and investigate about particular contexts, including psychology, ethnography and sociology. Ethnography is an outsider researcher perspective of what the researcher considers to be a homogenous group (Harris, 1968). This is a methodology often employed by Western European cultural anthropologists to investigate groups of "exotic" people as a strange phenomenon. The implications of the other people's history written about by researchers who do not speak the same language and have not grown up in the same way is that the other is studied as a "subject' and is depersonalised. Autoethnography and co-narrative opposes the idea of "othering", as often happens in anthropological/ethnographical studies.

Autoethnography challenges notions of the correct way of conducting qualitative research (Spry, 2016). The subjective stance taken by myself as the researcher means that the dynamic between myself and each participant influenced a cultural and social space. Socially conscious research meant that cognisance be taken of how I write, describe and analyse (graphy) personal (auto) experiences of my participants. If the aim is for deeper understanding of cultural (ethno) interactions towards what is socially just (Ellis, 2004;

Holman Jones, 2007, 2008), then I had to allow the participants in my study their own voice without leading through the interview process. Considering various definitions and encompassing these ideas, autoethnography is research conducted through writing and story-telling, using methods that connect personal experience to cultural, social and political events and intentions. There are tangible actions or inactions, emotions, awareness of self, and depth of introspection by the individual/s portrayed in descriptions through dialogue, illustrations and characterisation.

The conceptual framework for narrative studies is formed through the shared experiences of "temporality, sociality and place" using various texts. The idea is to highlight ethical issues, as in CRT research, and create new lenses for investigating experiences within their contexts (Clandinin & Huber, 2002; Clandinin, Huber, Steeves & Li, 2011). Often the view of the marginalised cannot be imagined by those in more dominant positions. Researchers relaying narratives and applying theoretical frames to their narratives is a way we can open spaces for this exposure. The analysis of the narrative aims to demonstrate the nuances, the realities and implications of living in a gendered, racially and socially divided context and the impact (negatively and positively) on the outcome of an individual. Furthermore, it offers a perspective on how Black women successfully or unsuccessfully negotiate these contexts throughout their lives.

4.4.2.1 Researcher-participant and participant

The social complexities and cultural entanglement which I have lived through and that I currently encounter makes me believe that feminism must be about race, class, culture and preferences of descriptors, and thus has to be intersectional. I would not have known the extent of my achievements and limitations without writing my narrative. I aimed to afford the participants as close to that experience as possible. All our narratives add to this research, by offering a critique of our contexts and ourselves, within the constructivist paradigm. Reflecting on how our identity is constructed within contexts is one way of offering a perspective not previously heard.

According to Chang *et al.* (2013:542), autoethnography "merges the researcher and the participant" giving a "vantage point" of critique on both the social world and the self from two perspectives. This equalises the power between researcher and participant, but only for the author. However, I wanted to take a step further because I am of a large group of marginalised in South Africa, while at the same time part of a minority who is marginalised

in my context. Including other participants added even more dynamics and dimensions to qualitative research as well as once again changing the power dynamic of the researcher-participant. Unlike collaborative autoethnography, where everyone is researcher-participant, this research upheaves that level field, but not in such a way that we "regress" to the researcher being "separate" from her research participants. I remained intimately aware of my positionality of researcher and as one participant in my research. Being wary of this positionality throughout my research and working within an "evolving paradigm", I adapted my methodological tools. I remain appreciative of the "nameless" participants as vital contributors to this research, as their stories have not only added to, but changed, the process and outcome of the study (Chang *et al.*, 2013).

Ellis (2004), Hollman Jones (2005) and Spry (2001) share the view that the basic premise of autoethnographic research is to describe and analyse personal realities towards understanding related cultural and structural experiences. As a method, autoethnography allows the individual to engage in analysing her views and perceptions of contextual events (Chang, 2008). It allows for more reflexivity and delving for meaning for the self and then for others (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). The research morphs from my own interest in social consciousness and what is perceived as socially just, to an examination of myself and others within contexts.

4.4.2.2 Artefacts

The data gathered were drawings, transcribed interviews, institutional reports revealing the history of institutions and other cultures. These are known as "mute" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) documents of events which are interpreted by the researcher. Drawings which were photographed and filed, memories of conversations and other written notes were moulded together to form the entire data set for this study. While the drawings were not analysed, I feel that they were essential to the reflexive process of the participants. The main purpose of the drawings was to initiate and extend the participants' narration.

4.5 Research procedures

4.5.1 Data collection

The data I collected include the use of an assortment of methods.

Own data: I took data from my autobiography which were stories I had started writing during 2009 when I considered doing a D.Lit. in English studies. I used pictures I had drawn

during a Critical Citizenship workshops which I attended during 2010 where we were asked to draw our "river of life".

Participants' data: I accessed institutional records via the human resources departments. I then emailed an invitation to participants enquiring about their willingness to be interviewed. I arranged to meet at their convenience and collected participant data during one-on-one interviews where they were asked to draw their contexts and, thereafter, explain their drawings, the relevant people and events depicted.

Other data: In my study, I use data from conversations I have had with Black women academics and where I kept a journal of these conversations.

4.5.2 Interviews

I conducted two interviews with each participant. The first interview was about their current context and the second about their educational trajectory up until their current positions. Other than asking participants to draw and speak about their contexts, I had no set interview questions. If prompting was needed, I asked them to tell me what enablers and constraints they encountered in their contexts.

4.5.3 Journal

The journal of conversations was minimally used as backing for some of the data from interviews and my own story. The journal readings allowed me to reflect on my own and others' perspectives of my research.

4.5.4 Data: Levels and sources

4.5.4.1 National institutional data and documents

Documents compiled during the bigger national project inform about institutional types, historical and geographical details, dominant language, size, resources as well as lecturer and student population. Public documents such as policies, mission and vision statements, especially those concerning race and gender inclusivity, were examined. Institutional mission statements serve as evidence of how institutions publicly state their stance on issues of transformation. The purpose of using policy documents is to determine the similarities and/or differences between the institutions' intended goals and actual experiences of individuals as described in their narratives. These documents will also be compared to see the alignment with documents from the Department of Higher Education and Training

regarding policies on transformation of gender and race inequalities in South African educational institutions. I will not share the specific details of the institutions included in this study as this would compromise the anonymity of the institutions. Details of any of the South African HEIs can be accessed in an internet search.

All the investigations took place at large to medium sized South African public institutions. Two of the universities are teaching-focused, historically disadvantaged institutions (HDI) and had been established specifically for Black students during the Apartheid era. Currently these institutions still cater for mainly poorer Black students. The other two institutions are research-focused, historically advantaged (HAI) and were previously for mainly white students. The average student cohort is still middle-class white students which possibly means that for the foreseeable future, the status quo will be maintained.

Once the merits of the research were established by the quantitative data, I concentrated the rest of my efforts in using various methods for collecting the quantitative data.

4.5.4.2 The participant data

The choice of participants was decided using quantitative sampling techniques as I had to be specific from within a limited pool (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The pool of participants was limited, as explained earlier that Black women in academic positions are under-represented:

i) level of homogeneity in sampling – a focus on participants who have had similar educational trajectories;
ii) purposive or criterion sampling – selecting participants who met specified criteria of age, race and gender;
iii) the selection – "information-rich cases" (Jones, Kim & Skendall, 2012) were selected as secondary sources (investigator being primary) as some interviewees were not available for a second interview by the time I aimed to complete the data collection phase.

Furthermore, the number of participants chosen depended on several variables. My approach was to have detail of educational trajectories and the political, societal and economic influences on these trajectories. I already knew that I was not going to achieve the level of detail with focus group interviews, nor with question and answer interviews. Variables had to be limited within the data in order to make the study manageable within

the scope, however, some variables remained "unknown" prior to interviews (Landu, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Variable could not be too limiting as the data collection is dependent on time and availability of possible participants.

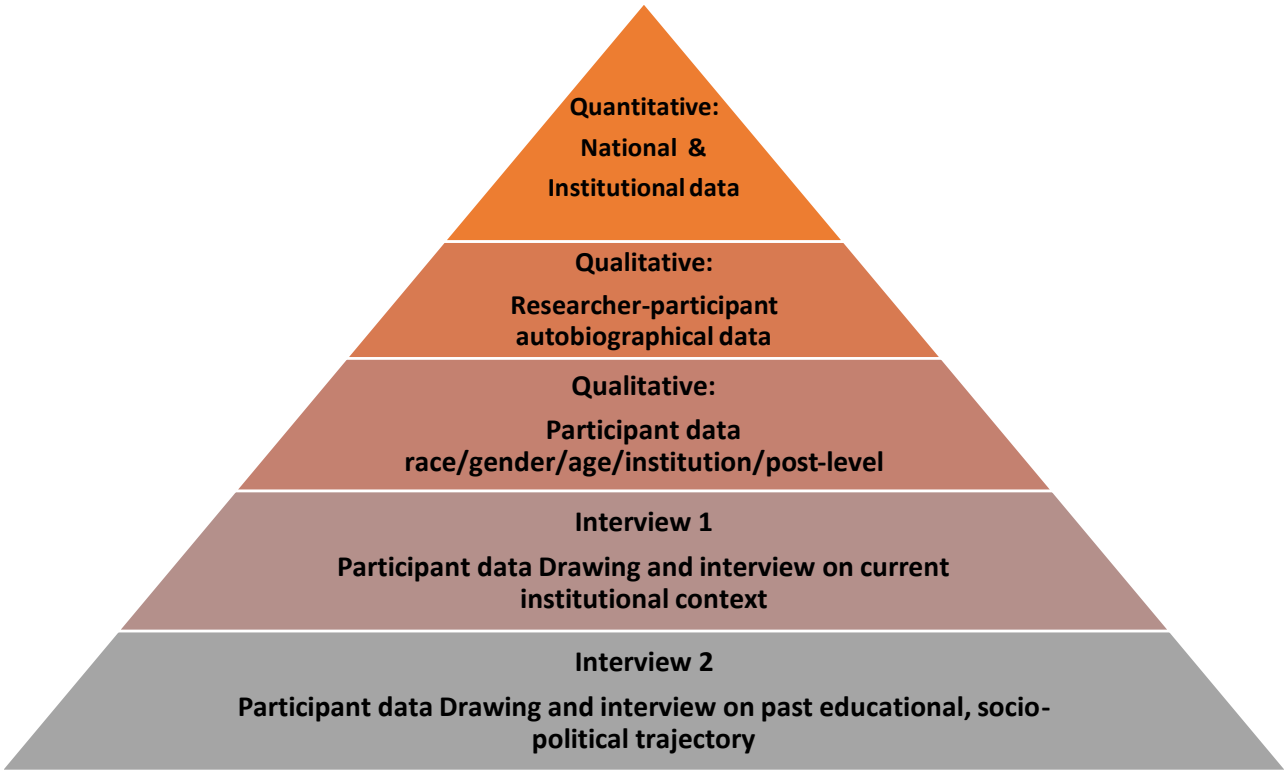


Figure 4.5.1: Data collection levels and sources

I wrote my incomplete and unpublished autobiography in 2009. This autobiographical writing was used as the main source of data for this thesis. Most of my stories were about experiences of learning and those who had positive or negative influences on my education. I thought it appropriate to use these pieces of my own story as they are pieces "uninformed" by my newer knowledge of structure, culture and agency and puts my artefacts as close to the participants as possible.

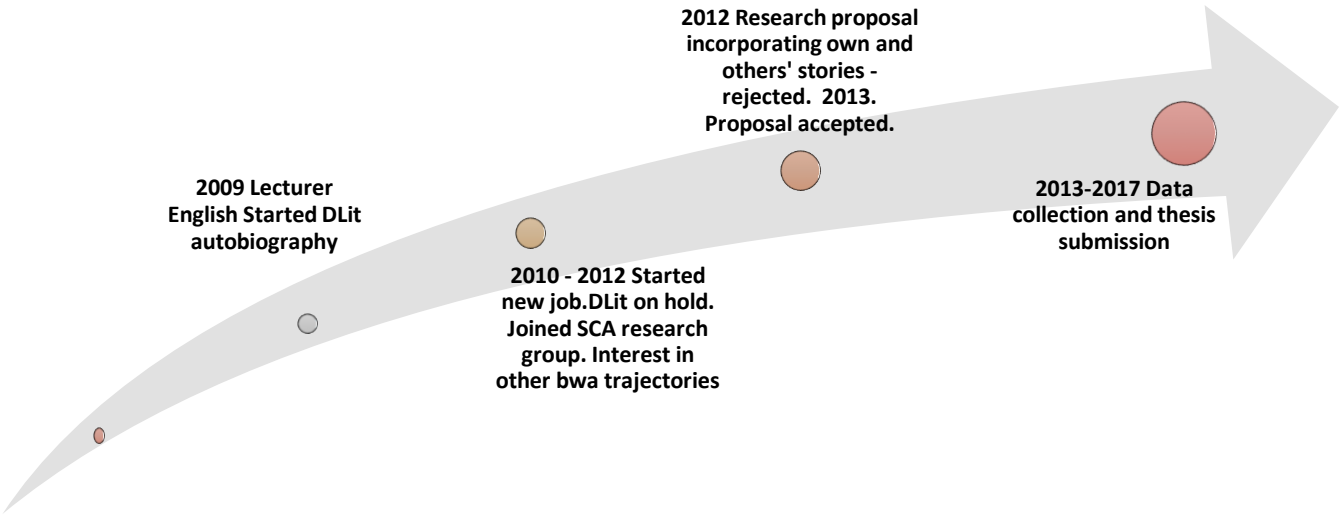


Figure 4.5.2: Researcher data collection

Being fundamentally like autobiography in that it tells the "true" story of subjective "I" perspective; autoethnography differs in an important way, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) and Denzin (1997) define autoethnography as a recent methodological improvement to qualitative methods. Autoethnography is a story-telling of the "I", yet at the same time it is much more reflective, interpretative and critical of self and culture. There is a deep awareness of the part "I" plays in the choices made affecting and interacting with society (Denzin 2013: Interpretive autoethnography). I hope that it will in fact be viewed rather as adding value and possibility to other researchers for their own research or to their understanding of the intercultural differences in doing research.

4.5.5 Participant data process

My decision to include participants in my research stemmed from my desire to find similarities with those who shared similar identities to mine. Ellis and Bochner (1996, 2000) state that there are various legitimate ways in which autoethnographic researchers include themselves in their research. My autobiographic details are analysed throughout the research leading to the development of contextual themes for a Black woman academic in South Africa. Checking my sense of feeling different is dealt with through the "ethno" by comparing experiences and perceptions with the participants' narratives. Chang *et al.* (2013:18) says that the "continuum of AE research allows researchers…to self-select their positionality in telling their interpretive stories". The participants were not known to me before I embarked on this research; the focus was on including participants based on my bias and interest in those who would socially be similarly described. I looked for two

commonalities: that participants were women and that all had been considered "non-white" under the Apartheid regime. I started collecting data from participants in 2013 and completed this phase in 2014. My participants are all close in age, Black and women working in academic institutions in South Africa. I interviewed each participant on two separate occasions at a pre-arranged place and time convenient to her.

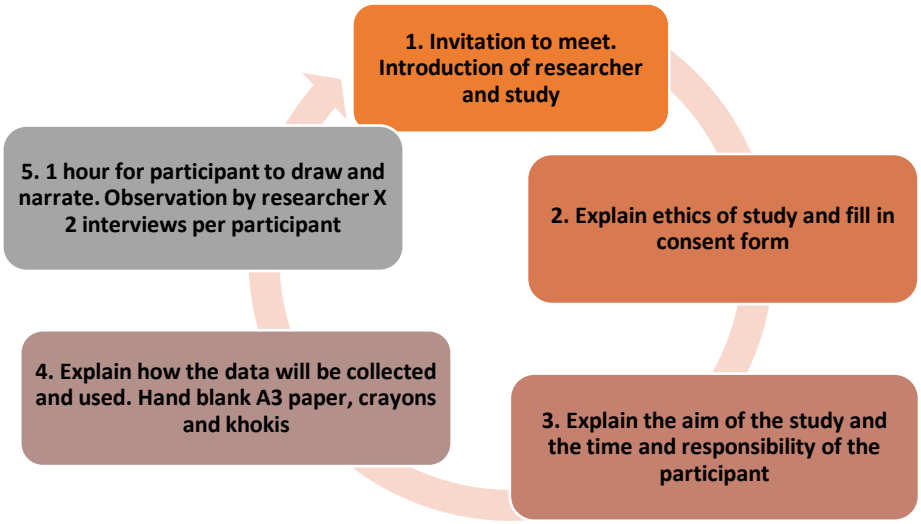


Figure 4.5.3: Interview process

The interview process included two individual in-depth interviews with each participant which included a request for drawing. I provided them with size A3 paper and crayons and khokis. Participants were then requested to explain the drawing and talk about any of the elements they felt were important to their educational trajectory. I recorded the interview with an audio recorder and took observation notes. I later transcribed the interviews.

Each of the two sessions for this data collection was about a specific part of their story. The first interview was about the participants' current context in the HEI. I asked her to draw her context as it is currently at the institution and to talk about this. In the second interview, I asked her to draw and describe her childhood educational and social background.

In the end, the narratives form one story where I trace a trajectory as told by the participant. I was especially interested in sections of the data which speak to notions of temporality, sociality and place impact on racialised and gendered identity and what the individual perceives as enablers and constraints in her trajectory through childhood to higher education (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). However, other than sharing the title of the research, I did not

reveal to the participants that this was my prime interest. I wanted to see whether these notions were foremost in the participants' experiences and perceptions in their contexts.

What transpired during the interviews was almost a soliloquy where participants relayed their experiences in what seemed to be an ease of telling.

I enjoyed the interaction with the participants as they started tentatively drawing, many claiming that they could not draw well. This set the start of the interview off to a light-spirited atmosphere with laughter. The process of moving from drawing to talking also started out slowly but all the participants soon started to narrate freely within a few minutes and became comfortable in what often turned out to be a soliloquy with notable shifts in emotions throughout their talking. The combination of these two media (drawings and narratives) served to avoid reductionism which occurs when trying "to explain complex social processes in terms of a single cause" (Silverman, 2010:94). Audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed. Using a mix of critical-auto-feminist-photo (drawing) ethnography (Denzin, 2013), where marginalised individuals take a more active role in their story-telling (Madison, 2006; Hammersley, 2007) can be considered to have an emancipatory role for both the researcher and the participants being interviewed. For me this study does more as it is not *just* stories of racialised, classified and gendered persons, but it is also their narrations of being racialised, classified and gendered. My view of the data collected is informed by particular theories which afford me the opportunity to shift my gaze from the wider institutional and overall social to a focussed personal view and how participants make meaning and decisions based on societal influences. The stories are not told in a linear or chronological order. Where possible, I tried to show development of stories.

4.5.5.1 First interview

Prior to, date and venue were set for the first interview to take place at the participants' convenience. Signed consent was obtained from the participants. I asked the participants to draw their current work context and what influenced their experiences, which could include institutional buildings, colleagues and students. I provided participants with A3 page and crayons/khokis and ask that they spend 10 to 15 minutes on the drawing (see appendices of drawings). I then asked the participants to explain what they had drawn. At the end of this interview, I reminded the participants about a second interview and dates and venues were agreed upon.

4.5.5.2 Second interview

The participants were again provided with an A3 page and crayons/khokis. The instruction for the second drawing was to depict features of their past experiences – growing up, family, friends, religion, schooling and university education. I then asked her to talk about her drawing with few prompts or questions if needed.

4.5.5.3 Researcher observation

During each interview, I noted my observations of the participants. I noted their reaction to certain events, when they would laugh, become serious or passionate about some aspect they were sharing. I added these observations to the analysis and descriptions of the interviews.

During the interviews, I noted that the participants felt at ease with offering very personal accounts of events in their lives. I felt at once complimented and wary that my insider identity may lead to data which other researchers do not get the opportunity to elicit. Amongst the factors which influenced the rapport could be that I easily strike up conversations in even unfamiliar situations. Another factor could be that, like the participants, I am a Black woman and that the participants considered this as "insider research".

4.6. The data collection encounters

The most satisfying part of the data collection process was that almost all the participants indicated that they had spoken about things they had forgotten or had not realised before how events had impacted them. All of them also told me that they were pleased to have been part of the research and enjoyed the process of drawing and many were surprised that they had so much to talk about without being asked questions. Initially, I was wary of eliciting "survivor" or "victim" type narratives. For this reason, I offered only the title of my research without politicking it further and asked simply that the participant draw and speak about her drawing. I found this to be highly successful, as in most cases it led to monologue-type communication with more "epiphany" than sympathy-type narratives (Saldana, 2013).

My biggest challenge in the data collection process were the encounters with gaining access to staff records. At one institution, it was an easier process than at the institution where I am employed. At another institution, the process took too long and ultimately the institution was excluded from the study.

From the thirty invitations I sent out, I received over twenty indications of interest. I made successful first appointments with sixteen respondents, and final successful interviews with eleven. I used five of these interviews as data for this study.

Certain interviews were excluded for various reasons. One of the respondents became too familiar and asked me many questions about myself. In the end, I felt that the data offered by her was influenced by my experiences. Another respondent spoke only about race issues; spoke only negatively about her institution, her white colleagues and students. Yet another of the respondents did not give enough detail as both of our interviews were interrupted and she had to leave. It became difficult to schedule a third and fourth interview with her.

My data collection was a linear process in that the individual interviews occurred in the order I wanted. I would have wanted at least one month between the two interviews with each participant. Unfortunately, due to different institutional schedules, in some cases I had to do the interview just days apart, while in other instances two or three months lapsed between individual interviews.

4.7 Data analysis

The analysis of my own data started at the beginning when I started identifying themes in my own story. Reading and the importance of education to advance played major roles in my life. Chapter Two of this thesis emphasises the important issues, experiences and perceptions in my own narrative and educational trajectory. It further outlines the history of education of most Black girls and women educated in a segregated South Africa. The post-Apartheid academic context was/is challenging for me to traverse. My personality as affected by my lived experiences determines that I have learned to speak up. Analysing the stories people tell does not mean that I interpret solely to my own expectations as I would have done before I set out on this study. However, it is driven by my values which may leave gaps in the data and interpretation. The study does deliver necessary knowledge about how other women act in similar contexts.

The main research question is aimed at investigating Black women's experiences and perceptions of their experiences in academic roles. The sub-questions further aim to investigate the development, through their socio-political-educational upbringing, of their desire or motivation to further education. I wanted to know why they have entered and remained in an arena where they would possibly be marginalised. I hoped that I would be

able to extrapolate from their narratives how they act and interact in their contexts and whether their current behaviour is an extension of their past experiences.

In addition to reading through and marking the transcripts as part of the data analysis, I felt it important to listen to the recordings a number of times (Chang *et al.*, 2013:102). This gave me reassurance that the notes I had taken after each interview reflected the emotions of the participant during the interview. I realise that these are reflections of my subjective experience but it was part of my process of verifying my understanding. I also feel confident that I have not misconstrued each participant's mood as the transcripts and my summary of each was sent to the participant.

4.7.1 Descriptive analysis

The title reveals the sector of the population which is the focus of this study. The data of the participants interviewed for this study is merely a summary of their statistics so that the reader has an idea of who the participants are. It also tells the reader that the participants were chosen for specific reasons relating to the main researcher-participant and how they fit within the historical purpose of the study.

4.7.2 Themes and codes

Analysing my own narrative took me approximately two years as the entire thesis is structured around it. Once I had decided on the main feature of my thesis, it was necessary to omit parts of my narrative to narrow the focus. Centring the thesis on the main themes of my educational trajectory and the influences came about when I realised that both my personal and occupational stances deem education and the impacts surrounding events as essential to the progress of individuals, families and broader society.

The issues which are most important to the study are developed through the course of initial analysis. The data showed substantial commentary on the historical and political context of the country's past and current conditions in higher education. My approach means that the categories emerged inductively from the data. When I realised that not only did I always know of my love of reading and learning but that it was reflected in my autobiography, my main theme was decided. "[R]educing topical categories to the essential minimum" is how themes are identified (Chang *et al.*, 2013). Once the themes of perceptions and experiences in education, codes regarding the issues (race, gender, marginalisation, belonging) were formulated from my own data, I had to interpret the participant data. It was important that I

be aware of these, as ultimately these would underlie the research questions, and know what I would concentrate on in the transcribed texts. This presented a problem for me as I did not want to interpret and present the narratives of others. I had offered my aversion to marginalised people having their history written for them. I was assured through other autoethnographic feminist work that this is not what I was doing. Any possible misrepresentation would be checked by my participants.

The analysis took shape as follows:

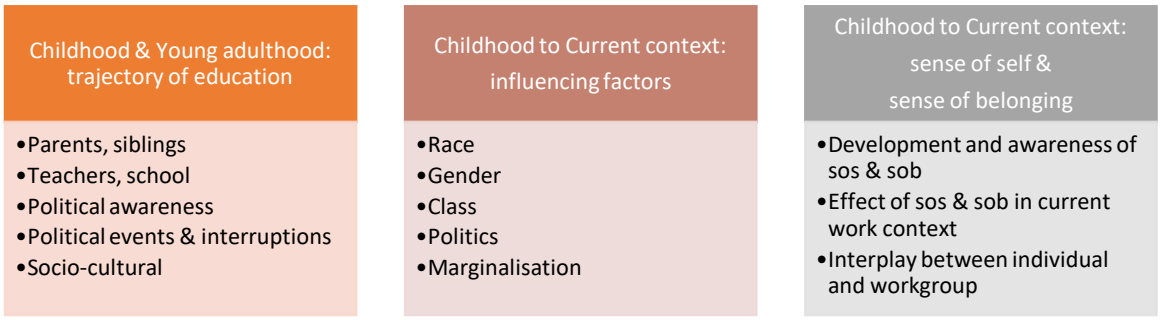


Figure 4.7.1: Relationships between themes and codes in data (adapted from Chang *et al.*, 2013:106)

Initial coding of the narratives is reflected in the chronological representation of the participants' educational and cultural lives. I noted whether they had grown up working class or middle class. This was often reflected in their descriptions of family, where they went to school and where they had lived. As one who had grown up in arguably the worst neighbourhood in South Africa, I am very aware of which were the "better" residential areas for Black and "coloured" people during Apartheid. During the interview process I became aware that each participant I was interviewing differed from me in the same specific area. During this process, I noted other differences in our narratives around the same events left different impressions on us depending on our family and social contexts. Saldana (2013) refers to "lumping" and "splitting" as part of the coding process to reach a more "nuanced" analysis. An example is that all the participants I interviewed remembered the Nestle boycott because they supported the Apartheid government. For myself and 3 of the participants it meant that we did not buy those products while for another participant it meant a loss of her father's job and income.

I admit that I was particularly sensitive about the social and class issues between myself and "middle" class children. As revealed earlier in Chapter One, I neither belonged to, nor was excluded from, the class divisions. I was working class, single-parented while my cousins and classmates at school were considered middle-class with two educated or professional

parents. Saldana (2013) warns of these motives and "unresolved personal issues" which creep into our analysis of the data. I felt, however, that autobiography gave me license to include personal responses. One such issue arose when a participant mentioned that they moved to an upper-class area close to the slum where I grew up. She mentioned the type of people and mentality one would encounter in there. While I agreed with her, when I had first met her, I had judged her as seemingly typical of the person I associated with that area. I would not have placed her as having grown up in Hanover Park but likewise she was surprised to learn afterwards that I had grown up in Hanover Park.

Saldana (2013:24) indicates that these personal issues need not be ignored. My thesis is highly personal and he says that the experience should indicate which approach would work for particular research goals.

I revisited the texts several times after the initial *short descriptions* and then added more *detailed, inclusion* and *exclusion* as well as *atypical exemplars* (Saldana, 2013:25). I colour-coded with highlighters on paper and electronically. I used the same specific colours on both versions and noted the overlaps in the individual narratives as well as across narratives. For example, the *short descriptions* meant that pink highlighter was used for all comments on gender, while green for all comments on race. These colour codes were then further fragmented into positive, negative, neutral and unusual with explanations written alongside.

4.7.3 Narrative analysis

Reading and education open worlds, first imaginary and then real – Jean Lee

The analysis of my own trajectory allowed me a chance to reflect on my educational development and my sense of self, what made me strong and my weaknesses. As I interviewed the participants, I realised that these women were the type of girls I had been envious of. Their parents were together and owned the house in which they lived. Their houses had a master bedroom and they had their own bedrooms and hot running water. I no longer felt this envy. This was not because I had by now achieved these classist possessions but because I had some security and normalcy, which I missed as a child. Saldana (2013:132) agrees that narrative analysis "is particularly suitable for such inquiries as development identity; psychological, social and cultural" senses. This is particularly relevant for critical evaluation of, and comment on, political systems such as classism, patriarchy and racism.

4.7.3.1 Chronology of narratives

Part of the purpose of this study was to look at the development over a lifetime. The narratives, however, were seldom told in chronological order. As discussed in Chapter One, our stories often occur to us in terms of relevance and importance rather than in a linear fashion. I had already attempted to deal with my narrative in chronological order. This was a time-consuming process and is possibly not done accurately as memory can deceive us. I also placed the stories of the participants as chronologically as possible in a short summary about each.

4.7.3.2 Assumptions in the data

Analysing the narratives of the participants is more challenging as I (the researcher) sometimes had to make nuanced assumptions about their experiences based on my own subjective interest in the topic. This interpretation by me may well affect the validity of the research and should be noted. This also determined that the narratives, once put in chronological order and written in my own words, be cross-checked with the participants. Although I had developed the broader themes from my own narrative and based the research questions on this, I did not alone want to abstract understanding of the participants' stories. I wanted to construct, for us, a deeper understanding of our decisions and actions. Saldana (2013) states that narrative analysis is not a "solitary" researcher exercise but is considered by postmodernists as a partnership between researcher and participant.

The uniqueness of my research is that it is based on life stories centring on a main theme, i.e., education and what each participant perceived to be influencing factors in their educational trajectory. I wanted to afford each person to tell their "big" and "little stories" and so reveal, I believe, an account of their own understanding of the motivation behind their educational desire and perseverance. The stories we tell about ourselves is the "legitimate" "knowledge" we hold about events which have influenced us either "negatively" or "positively" towards us achieving what we set out to achieve (Saldana, 2013). Although the purpose of the study was not aimed at epiphanies, I found that for myself and the participants we possess knowledge about ourselves which remains hidden unless we take the opportunity to reflect purposefully.

4.8 Validity

The limitations of this type of research remain that even if all social aspects are aligned, there can be no definitive foretelling of the outcome. Similarly, as per constructivism, because reality and truth are internal, so also is validity (Gergen & Davis, 1985; Mathieson, 2012). The value of something depends on what an individual has been taught by their social interactions. The legitimation of the knowledge is dependent on the needs and values of the person seeking the information (Maton & Moore, 2010). What we should ask about qualitative research, such as autoethnography, is whether the interpretation of the data holds credibility within academia beyond the person who is sharing their perspective. The "credibility and legitimation" should reasonably hold "in the public interest" despite the researcher "contest[ing]" known methods (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006; Riach, 2017; Donoghue *et al.*, 2018).

The variables of interpretation and understanding within qualitative study can be "discreet" and thus cannot always be accounted for (Hughes *et al.*, 2015). Neither can the combination or interrelatedness of one variable (past experiences or factors such as race, class and gender) be deemed as definitive to an outcome, for example, love of reading to academic success (Lykke, 2010; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). We also do not have the answers to which areas of our lives our experiences do extend. Sparkes (2000:21, 30) describes autoethnography as "highly personalized accounts that draw upon the experiences of the author/researcher for the purposes of extending sociological understanding". The "social understanding" in turn becomes "highly personalized" as interpretation is dependent on the reader.

Heeding critique about one's research is a way of ensuring validity, keeping one responsive to a bigger purpose than oneself. Delamont (2009:55) states that "*[t]he only honest thing"* (referring to autoethnography) is when scholars research themselves because they admit that their chosen projects hold personal importance. She states that autoethnography is concerned with what matters to the researcher. Reading this statement in deliberate isolation made me question whether my motives for doing research were valid. I had wanted to believe that what I was researching was for a greater good as well. My promoters reassured me due to my using only those parts of my narrative which affects many Black girls and women, and assured me that it was good that I also concerned myself with such critique. Reading the same Delamont (2009:58) article later in my process, I came to understand that

I was using both methods described in her article. I do believe that mine is not what can be described as "autoethnographic self-obsession". She distinguishes *autoethnography*, in the terms of (Ellis, 2004) and Chang (2007) when writing about my own narrative of my trajectory, from *reflexive autobiographical writing*. The latter is when the researcher writes on her experiences of researching individuals other than herself.

4.9 Research ethics

Ethics in relaying the narratives of self is also relaying parts of the narratives of others and deserves the highest priority. Firstly, I applied for research ethics from the institution which would bestow my doctoral degree. It is important that the institutions included in this research be confident in my true intention of working towards a greater good and not to bring the institution into disrepute. This is especially true for my own institution which is not anonymised, as with the other institutions in this study. I subsequently applied and received ethics approval from the other institutions. I required ethical clearance from research ethics committees at the various institutions, gained access to staff records from administrative departments and then awaited responses to email requests from potential participants.

The "telling secrets" aspect of autoethnographic studies cannot be undermined as the researcher is not only telling her own secrets but, by implication, those people who are part of her life (Ellis, 2007). Despite member-checking, the researcher has final say in how the narratives are interpreted and portrayed (Trahar, 2009; Stake, 2010). I promised the participants that although they are anonymised, I would attempt to be true to their portrayal and that my interpretation would not necessarily or directly reflect on their opinions. Informed consent (form attached as Appendix A) was signed by all participants irrespective of whether their data was used in the study. Those whose data was used were sent transcripts of the interviews as well as a summary of my description of them (Chapter Five). They could then inform me whether they agreed to still be part of the data. Two of the participants asked for assurance that I would not mention their names and this reinforced the notion that race, gender and class are sensitive issues to address at certain institutions. I was cognisant that I gain more from this research than any of the participants and was careful to show appreciation of their time.

4.10 Chapter summary

The research design and methodology chapter offered an explanation and reasons of the methods adapted and employed. An exploration of the participants' experiences and trajectories from various communities in South Africa in the following chapters (Five and Six) showed that we all differed in our perceptions of self, others and the contexts in which we operate. The methodology allowed for unique encounters to be presented without the guidance of set questions. Drawings and conversations allowed freedom of communication between interviewee and interviewer, notwithstanding the obvious power dynamics, explained in this chapter, between participant and researcher. The analysis chapter which follows depicts the conversations as they were presented in broad themes explained throughout the thesis. It further shows how knowledge can be co-constructed to serve the participants as well as researcher and readers.

Chapter Five

Narrative Analysis

> *Ethnic otherness is marked as troublesome, inferior…forced to struggle to find its place…as opposed to, or as a threat to the academic. Throughout these described moments I remain silent. My voice is given back to me through this autoethnographic text…a way to oppose otherness due to its power to see these moments of ethnic otherness and resist them. (Tsalach, 2013:79)*

5.1 Introduction

The foremost description of being "othered" means not being white. However, having shared ethnic descriptions as well as experiences of the (apartheid) structures under which we had been educated and socialised in common, does not mean that we shared perceptions of these experiences. Critiquing the values, culture and discourse we are exposed to was also not a shared mindset between myself and the participants. This took me by surprise. I had mistakenly thought that there would be a shared notion of politics amongst Black academics of a certain age. One example was something as simple as the idea of what is a presentable manner of wearing one's hair.

An interesting example is that all other "coloured" participants chemically straighten their hair. I have no issue with this but had thought that it would be more common for Black women to have shifted from the colonial notion of acceptable and prefer to wear their hair natural. My issue here is that I wear my hair natural and "kroes" (kinky) and two participants commented that they always keep their own hair tidy and presentable, insinuating that mine was neither. This interested me to further reading for personal reasons as I felt affronted but as the researcher did not want to address lest it caused discomfort. Further reading assisted in understanding and appreciation that the individual realities shared in the narratives should be viewed as an "equalisation of voices as lenses that could be used for analysis" (Divala, 2014:2079, 2085). Compared to quantitative methodologies, qualitative research individualises reality, i.e., gives us the opportunity to zoom in so that we see the proverbial tree in the forest as well as zoom out again to see the forest of trees. We can use these opportunities to learn from and about, and impose what we have learned on, our interactions.

The stages of my research, with the understanding that there is no common reality, can be summarised as follows:

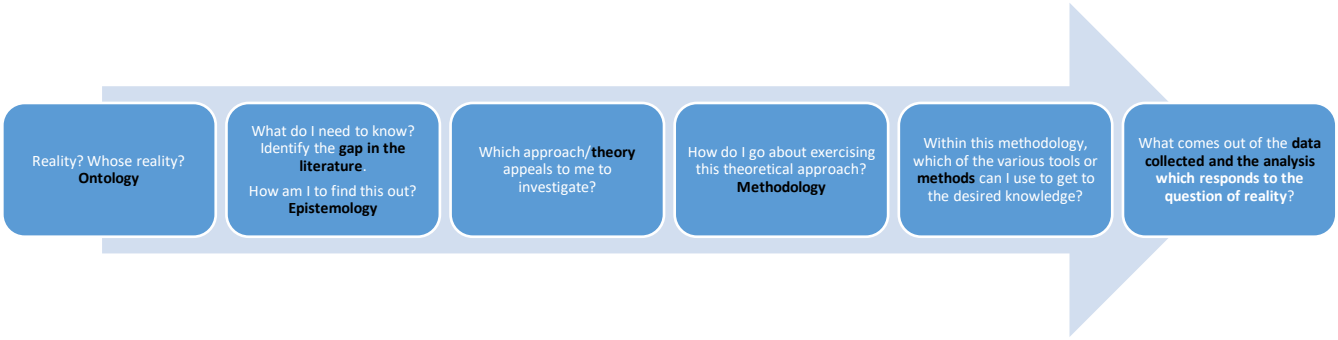


Figure 5.1.1: Making sense of the methods

5.1.1 Key ideas from the research questions

The following figure highlights the keywords I kept in mind as I reviewed the data collected from the participants. After highlighting these in the interview data, I set about comparing the narratives for patterns of similarity as well as any anomalous occurrences in individual stories.

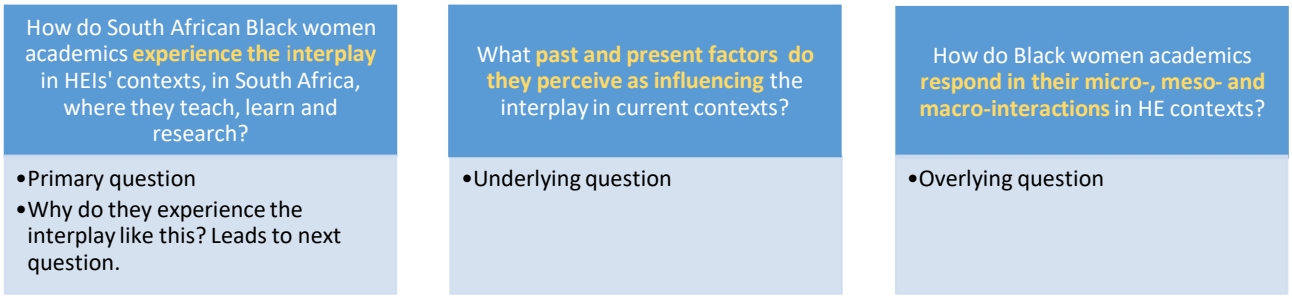


Figure 5.1.2 Deciphering my research questions

Accounting for one person's success or failure in the same context when there are obvious, less-obvious disparities, is not a simple task. The scope of this study is only to account for some of the perceived influencing factors. There are no absolutes and further intricacies will exist when we look critically at the micro-level interactions. One person's reasons for failure and success cannot be transcribed to effectively express the extent of complexities for that person. To ascribe results of one person to an entire assumed culture of people is further insult to racialised and gendered identities. I thus cannot claim to describe fully events from every perspective, much less those of other Black women academics, whether from similar or dissimilar contexts.

5.1.2 Challenging the idea of homogeneity

In this chapter I show that perceptions of the same contexts will differ because we are not homogenous beings. I cannot expect this to be understood by those who had experiences on the opposite side of Apartheid but not adhere to these notions myself. Therefore, I accept that the participants and I do not necessarily share political views although we have come from similar experiences.

The dynamic of power in the interplay between individuals (including between myself as author and the participants) also has to be considered and because the participants were aware of my title, my bias may already have been exposed to them. I do believe that still there is an honesty in their views as I did come across views of culture and society which are more conservative towards the political right. I cannot say that this did not upset me somewhat, but I accept that.

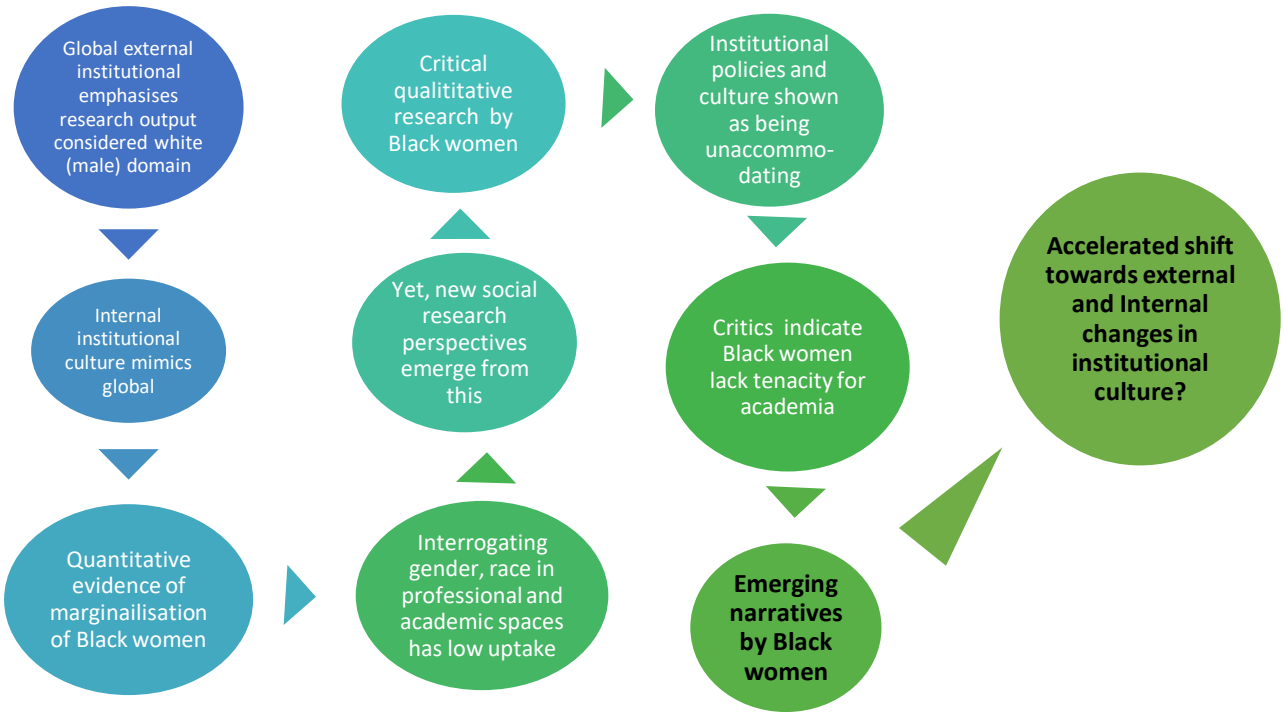


Figure 5.1.3 Shifting institutional culture

The data collected allows for the possibility that my interpretation may be challenged by alternate perceptions. My assertion is in response to possible critique by quantitative and ethnographic researchers that self-narrative is indulgent with limitations of commitments to relativism, radical social justice and casual discourse (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006;

Muthukrishna, 2008; DeLeon, 2010). Similar criticism is backed by contentions that highly qualitative research, such as autoethnography, is revolutionary while based close to known frameworks or mere reframing of European research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005:316). In their preface, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) emphasise their position against such critique. They argue that some researchers are "*bricoleurs*" dealing with complexity for "clarification of his or her position in the web of reality and the social locations of other researchers". As Black women researchers are new to having their research published, investigating the unique intersecting patterns of race, gender and class in educational domains of Black women's experiences have not often been recorded. For this reason, no set framework is assumed in such research, while adaptation and innovation is encouraged and defendable.

In defence of this research and in response to questions, which, under various pretexts, I had often been asked: Is the intersectional feminist stance meant to be representative for all Black women? I cannot answer that question simply. My research is exclusionary of white women and Black men, who doubtlessly experience *more* challenges in academia than white men. Very recently (November 2018) a white male academic responded to my Black woman promoter's address on Intersectionality, by saying that white men also struggle in balancing research, teaching, raising families, etc. Racial (fair to very dark complexions) and gender (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender – LGBTI) categories make it problematic to mark the proximity to Blackness and whiteness and 'femaleness' to 'maleness'. This does not mean that these issues should be ignored. I acknowledge that as a Black woman being heterosexual, with a relatively fair complexion, means that my trajectory has been easier than some who are darker and/or identify as LGBTI. In the same way, my complexion often means that it is perceived, before opening my mouth, that my accent will be easier to understand, which may make me more employable than another Black woman who has English as her fourth or fifth language. The closer proximity to whiteness means more privileges, both educational as well as cultural.

5.1.3 The dominant group

In Chapter Four I developed the following figure to indicate how white men have in the past, and still in the present, made up the dominant groups of academic, economic and structural access and success. This is portrayed by the green cells immediately surrounding the centre. The wider gap to access the centre is open firstly to white women followed by Black men. The coagulation of privilege of being white male is comparable to the

incalculable intersections of being a marginalised Black woman. I have placed "white heterosexual male" on top of "dominant group" because this characteristic, even in the absence of all the other green hexagons, automatically means "belonging/entitled/deserving".

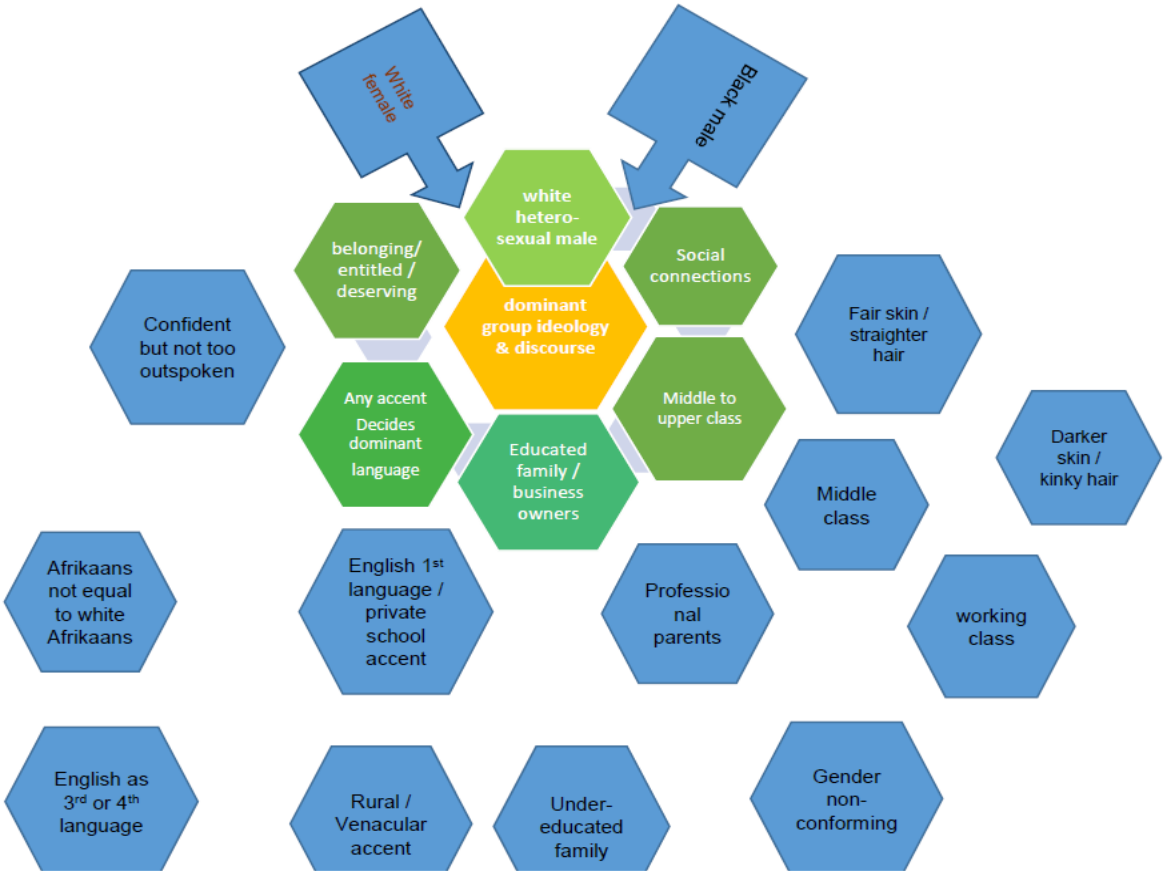


Figure 5.1.4: Factors influencing access to the dominant centre

The influencing factors from our past are arguably still present in our current positions. The factors which determined how likely we were to succeed depending on our family's status may no longer be obvious but each of us carry the identity of being further removed from the centre of privilege, albeit by different degrees or number of factors, than white males.

The table below gives an overview of each of the participants' identifying factors that shift us closer or further from the ideal at the centre. Each of these factors have underlying facets. An example would be that "working class" also means not owning property, low or no regular income, lower access to schools or libraries, unsettled homes, navigation of dangerous social spaces and irregular, unhealthy meals. The scores for this cannot be calculated or adequately compared with where others Black women and children are positioned in the hierarchy. We can however assume that, depending on certain traits and

privileges, Black women exist on the margins. Having a middle-class upbringing, speaking the dominant language in the preferred "white" accent would count in favour for some Blacks, making the white centre more accessible, but still not there. I have allocated imaginary scores to the blue hexagons to indicate how the possibility of being acceptable to whoever is at the centre increases the closer one grows up to white male privilege. While the scores range between 1 and 3, it does not mean that adding up white male privilege equals the sum of the most favourable hexagons. These factors, I believe, had an influence on each one's likelihood of academic (or other) success. The participants of this study fit the blue sections as indicated above and scored in the following ways:

Participant data		Background data						
Name	**Current**	**Studied at HDU = 1 HAU = 3**	**Class Work = 0 Middle = 2**	**Proximity to White Dark = 0 Med = 1 White passing = 3**	**Parents' Education Under = 0 Stable employ = 2 Professional = 3**	**1st lang Eng = 3 Afrik = 1 isiXhosa = 0**	**Protective home environment i.e., care-giver present after school**	**Hypo-thetical score of like-lihood of academic success**
Jean	**HAU**	**HDU**	**W**	**M**	**U**	**E**	**No = 0**	**6**
Bonnie	**HAU**	**HDU**	**W**	**D**	**U**	**isiX / E**	**Yes = 3**	**7**
Naz	**HAU**	**HDU**	**M**	**M**	**S**	**E**	**Yes = 3**	**13**
Caro	**HDU**	**HAU**	**M**	**WP**	**P**	**E**	**Yes = 3**	**17**
Rina	**HAU**	**HAU**	**M**	**M**	**P**	**E**	**Yes = 3**	**17**
Sindy	**HDU**	**HDU**	**M**	**M**	**S**	**E**	**Yes = 3**	**13**

Table 5.1.1: Scoring of Privilege

The scores are hypothetical as the table allows only for the noticeable social factors. It gives no account of the family's aspirations or the extent to which they enabled and instilled the habits, such as reading, tenacity, positivity, etc., necessary for success. The scoring can also not give an account of sense of agency, self-motivation, level of appreciated intelligence and engagement with learning. A necessary limit of the doctoral study is that the themes are informed by the literature (Chapter Two). My own narrative denotes related phases of participants' childhood educational experiences. These relations are thus subjective and shown through chosen excerpts from the narratives later in this chapter.

5.2 Interviews responding to the main research questions

The primary research questions relate to the analysis of the narratives in terms of the experiences, perceptions and interplay within our current contexts. South African universities are currently (2020), seven years after I started this research, still criticised for the under-representation of Black women academics (Salem, 2016; Lekgotla, 2017).

5.3 Past influences on the present

Literature reveals that influences of childhood experiences, positive and negative, leave an indelible mark on our identities. Our memories of the past come to the fore most prominently if they were either very happy or very traumatic experiences.

5.3.1 The researcher

My interpretation of the participants' narratives for interplay in their childhood culture and the HE context is telling of my own perceptions. I am mindful too that participants may have viewed me as a representative "of a broader social world in which the narrative is oriented" (Stephens, 2013:16) (I am a Black or mixed-race). People construct their narratives of their current context by their social experiences and reveal "secrets" depending on their perceptions of who is interviewing them (Riessman, 2001; Nunley, 2009). Perceptions of shared knowledge of events or experiences between researcher and participant, such as political understanding or experiences of illness, often determines the depth of the data garnered. Interviewed narrators choose how and which parts of their story they tell depending on their perceptions of who is present (Riessman, 2001; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Any number of analytic approaches can be used to access our subjective notions and bring about varying levels of results.

One element is certain: the narratives of my participants, like my own, are curiously at odds with the Apartheid government's intent and societal expectation for Black girls. In responding to this curiosity, I wanted to know reasons: the interplay, choices, triggers and motivation for continuing to work in the challenging academic domain. As part of this primary objective, the text throughout the previous chapters is scattered with excerpts from my narrative, and here, the inclusion of my participants' narratives to investigate our motivation.

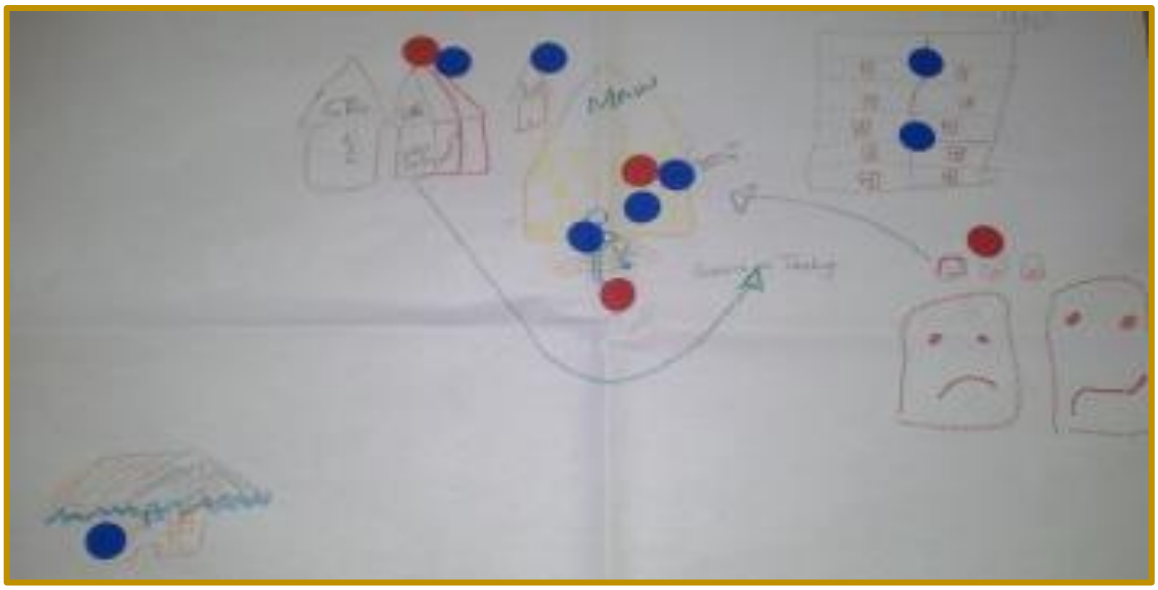
5.3.2 The participants

The co-constructed narrative means that the participants' input authenticates the researcher's subjective outcome. Our perceived similarities in social background and "non-white" (a detested term) status during Apartheid does not mean that the participants would reveal more to me on the topics around race and social issues. I decided not to have pre-set questions (except for prompts as necessary) but rather to open the space for the participant to relay her story in the manner she reflected on it. In designing the methodology I kept in

mind that participants could have any of the eleven official languages of South Africa as first, second or third languages before English. English is my first language which, in South Africa, is largely viewed as a status language. Firstly, drawing about their experiences and perceptions allowed time for non-first language English speakers to reflect, in their first language, on what they would be saying. Having participants' drawings would also allow the participants to easily put their immediate thoughts on paper and avoid possible discomfort with the language they were required to use, which may not be their first language.

In responding to my invitation, the participants exercised a sense of agency as well as sense of belonging as they identified as Black women academics, whether Black, Indian, "coloured" or Asian (BICA). It should not be forgotten that Asians, "coloureds" and Indians were likely to have grown up with more privileges than Black people. All participants identified as women. No-one objected to any terminology used in this study and I contacted participants based on the gender assigned by their institution. Comparing qualitative and quantitative data justifies what I think of as complementary methodological tools (Clark & Creswell, 2008). The qualitative study uses the tools of research to investigate possible underlying reasons for a phenomenon highlighted by quantitative data. A critical social constructivist paradigm accommodates the use of quantitative data to further develop a frame for qualitative methods towards reducing and selecting a focus of attention (Silverman, 2010).

a) Bonny



Bonny was the first person I interviewed for my research and this took place in 2012 at her office. She is a senior lecturer at a HAU and what is still a predominantly white institution as far as both academic staff and students are concerned. She had also taught and studied at two different HDUs. Bonny teaches in the social sciences on race and gender issues which is also her field of study. She has a PhD and teaches at both junior and senior levels.

Her drawing: It depicts the divide between herself, students and the institution. At the bottom right is where she lives, in a "township" which is marked with a "positive" blue dot. Her drawing of the faculty building is marked with blue for her interactions with her students and some of her colleagues. Other interactions with colleagues are marked with a "negative" red. She indicated that she does not feel "at home" in the institution and often wished that something would happen between home and institution so that she did not have to arrive at work. The faces drawn on her picture are hers at the institution and indicates that she mostly feels unhappy or indifferent.

Bonny said that she does not have friends at work, and home and work life are completely separate and this was not her experience at her previous HDU.

At first she lamented her lack of confidence in drawing but after just a few minutes she settled into it and enjoyed the process. She seemed cautious about sharing details of her faculty and often hesitated before sharing what she felt was supposedly confidential in nature. She told me about the university boards she served on. She was more comfortable sharing about her micro-level interactions – departmental work, her students and colleagues – even though she felt that these were also sensitive areas – because she was more positive about these experiences.

Our second encounter happened 4 months later in 2013 in the staff room of her department. She spoke openly and reminiscently about her childhood memories and her boarding school, convent-education and returning to the rural village of her family for holidays. She seemed animated sharing snippets about being educated by liberal white nuns and also being away from home from a young age.

On both occasions that we met, the passages were quiet, with most of her fellow-academics in their offices behind closed doors. We were not disturbed at all during the interviews.

b) Caro

Caro teaches at a HDU and at the time, in 2013, was acting head of department and a member on a number of high-level boards at her institution. Caro was open and welcoming and forthright. She spoke freely, which caught me by surprise as, up until then, in the encounters I had had with Bonny, Rina and Naz, I experienced them as guarded. Caro and everyone in her department were welcoming and friendly. Her colleagues' doors opened into the common area where student assistants and lecturers mulled about, chatting. The atmosphere was congenial and everyone, administrative staff, students and academics gathered around the open lounge entrance. Caro introduced me and after a chat, said that she was going to have to close her office door as we were going to be busy with a recorded interview. The secretary at the front desk promised to try to keep people out of Caro's office.

Her drawing:

Caro's drawing shows her sitting at the boardroom table with mostly white men. She is head of department and says that she feels that she can express herself and respected for the space she takes up at the table. She feels respected and the interactions between herself and her senior colleagues are both comfortable and supportive. She feels the same within her department and workgroup where she enjoys close relationships with all academic and administrative staff. She indicated that she is content at her institution and her only source of discontent is that her students are impoverished and often hungry which causes them to struggle with their studies.

She said that her husband is understanding of her need to work late and give a lot of herself to her students. She said that her colleagues are her friends and that they often meet outside

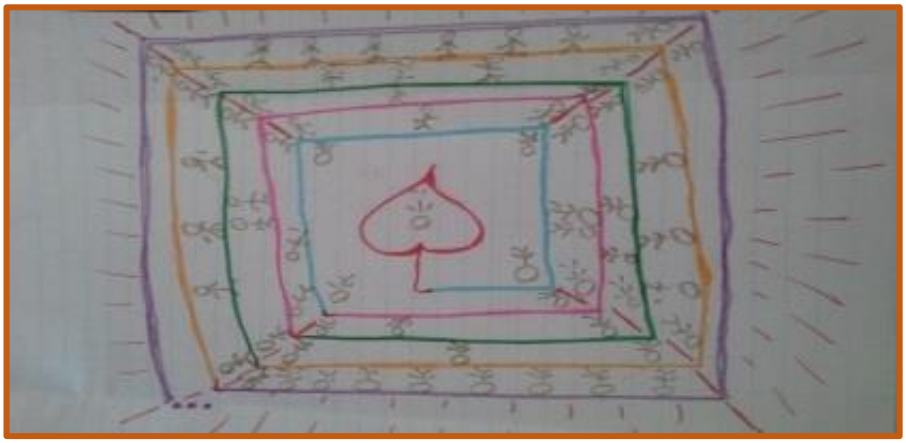
of work. Five years after the interview I met Caro at my friend's 40th birthday party. My friend is white and is married to Caro's white senior colleague.

Caro started off by saying that she could not draw well and felt self-conscious at first. She soon got carried away and drew while she spoke. We were constantly interrupted and people would knock once or twice, open the door, greet and then excuse themselves when they realised that we were busy. Each time she shrugged, smiled and carried on. She spoke openly and sincerely about her institution, students, faculty and workgroup. Her students are Black, mostly so poor that they do not eat every day. Caro had previously worked and studied at a HAU and often drew uninvited comparisons between the two institutions' policies and cultures.

Our second interview took place two months later, also at her office. Caro seemed to be a good story-teller, spoke almost throughout the entire interview with very few prompts. She told interesting stories about her childhood, being bullied at school, her admiration for her older brother and how she became a student activist in high school because there was never a question about the inequality in South Africa.

Caro and I met at a party a few years later and she asked about my research. She was sympathetic when I explained that I had been delayed in completing due to illness and loss of sight in one eye. She told me that she was still happy at her institution although she lectured evening classes to help out at her alma mater, a HAU. She said that she would have to stop doing that as she felt she was neglecting her own Black postgraduate students at the HDU.

c) Naz



Naz lectures at a HAU and had studied at both HAU and HDU. I interviewed Naz in 2014 and again in 2015. Naz and I had arranged to meet twice before but logistics and calendar clashes prevented this and we had to postpone. We then found that we would both be attending the same academic retreat and agreed to do the first interview there. Naz was extremely cautious about what she shared and asked a number of times that I ensure that she would not be identified in my thesis. She spoke guardedly about her institution's policies, lack of transformation and attitude amongst academic staff and how difficult it was for Black women and men.

Her drawing: Naz deliberately drew barriers between herself/her intentions in the centre (indicated by a heart), her Black colleagues, the students and others in the institution. She said that her work is about constantly trying to break down barriers while always finding more barriers. This makes working as an academic developer and academic in her HAU challenging. She said that the Black lecturers who come to her for assistance and support are often victims of racism. They are referred to her by their heads of department because students complain about their accents. She said that white foreign lecturers are never referred or complained about by students.

We met at another retreat five months later. Naz did not share extensively about her years growing up and I needed to prompt her a few times. She had lost her mother at a young age and grew up in a protected environment. Her school years were marked by student uprisings which affected her deeply, she said. In high school she realised her proximity to privilege in a province where most Black people are poor.

d) Rina

I interviewed Rina at a national conference where we completed both interviews two days apart. She lectures at the same HAU where she had studied. She had had no experiences of studying or lecturing at HDU but had taught high school at the school I had attended albeit years after I had left. Rina and I laughed so much during our interview.

Her drawing: Rina sees the entire HE context as a rollercoaster ride. She says she is often scared, excited and confused at the same time. She says that there are both negatives and positives to working at her HAU. She had studied there and her interview about how unwelcome she felt was really interesting. She says that after 20 years at the same institution she knows that she will never feel like it will be home. Rina also said that she only meets up outside of work with other people of colour. She said that she knows that the white colleagues meet up outside of work but that only other whites are invited. She noted her students as the only real positive relationships within the institution.

Rina and I had spent our childhood years within 1 kilometre of each other but had never met before. We were from opposite "sides of the track" but knew many people, places and events in common. She is a few years older than me and we found out that two years after I left my high school she started to teach at the same school and became good friends with my beloved teachers from my Senior Secondary School. She was open and jocular about her experiences with her faculty, department and individuals she had encountered in academia. She was blatant about her negative reception at some institutional events but seemed to harbour no animosity. At first she asked questions about what I wanted to know. I

encouraged her to speak about what she wanted to share and felt was important. Both times, by the time she had completed her drawing and I started recording, she spoke almost uninterruptedly.

e) Sindy

My first meeting with Sindy was quite chaotic. We had to move around to find a place to settle which was quiet enough to conduct the interview. She works in a busy social sciences department at a HDU. Her students kept coming to the open door and there was a pleasant bustling in the passage. She felt bad that she had to close the door and eventually lock it so we would not be disturbed. She seemed content in her space and spoke with empathy about the difficult social contexts of the students at the university.

Her drawing: Sindy drew her faculty and institution as mostly positive. While she indicated her students as red for "negative", she explained that this was to indicate that they were poor and often struggled economically and socially. She said that her students were hardworking and that she loved teaching. The other negative was the structural issues such as insufficient and uncomfortable venues at the university. The many blue "positive" dots indicated the amount of support she felt she and colleagues received from their dean and management at the institution. She said that they all felt like one big struggling family where no-one was left unheard. Her studies and ambitions were encouraged by everyone.

The analysis is a meaning-making process of what was shared by the participants. It is what I perceive as the interplay between myself and the participants' narratives. Our childhood

factors play out in our current contexts, thus it is imperative to understand how the trajectory influences our present interactions. We carry our genetic make-up and personality traits in both recognisable and less recognisable ways – just like birthmarks or skin tone. In the same way, our past constraints and enablers accompany us in obvious and less obvious ways like the scars on our knees from falling or the lilt of our voices when we speak. Some of these past factors influence our perceptions of others in our current contexts, whether we consciously recall them or not. They also influence how others perceive us by our habits and knowledge of certain things. It is important to realise that it is these perceptions by ourselves and others which affect the interplay in our environments.

5.3.3 The early years

The importance of interviewing participants about their early educational years, was to relate their experiences of an unequal society, the involvement in the fight against the Apartheid regime in secondary and early tertiary education, while still trying to deliver the level of excellence expected at higher education institutions. As we were all of similar ages and had grown up in South Africa during the Apartheid years, our awareness of the politics occurred at around the same time. Sindy, Rina and I grew up and attended schools in close proximity to each other in the Western Cape. Although they lived in middle-class suburbs and I was from a working-class ghetto-like area, our schools and communities shared the experiences of boycotts, riots and deaths of popular struggle icons like Ashley Kriel (Bock, 2012) whom both Rina and I had known. We had grown up within a 2 kilometres radius of each other but were of different social classes. We recalled and were affected by the 1970s and 1980s Group Areas and Immorality Acts being enforced as well as the student uprising happening around us. I had known many girls like Sindy, Caro and Rina. As an adult, Sindy still comes across as hyper-aware of social class and less so of deep political issues.

> *Rina: So we moved to the coloured area, there (indicating on her drawing), Penlyn Estate in Athlone.*
>
> *Jean: Oh that is so close to where I grew up in Hanover Park (but middle class whereas Hanover Park was working class) (Rina)*

By comparison, Caro, Rina, Naz, Bonnie and I were sensitive to political correctness and concerns. Naz and Bonnie grew up in KwaZulu Natal which then was separated as Zululand (for Black people like Bonnie) and Natal (for Indian people like Naz).

I enjoyed my interview experience with Sindy, Caro and Rina and we were all certain that through events, shops, friends and acquaintances, we were closely connected. I could easily relate to what concerned them. We laughed and got sad together during the second interviews. These interviews centred around common childhood characters, experiences and events.

Bonny and I related more on matters of economic struggle as we had both grown up with working-class parents. The difference is that I had grown up in a gang-ridden township while Bonny had spent her early childhood in a small rural village with more closely protective adults than I had. Having grown up as a "latchkey kid", I differed from all of the participants in that they always had someone at home all day to take care of them. All the participants also had two parents while I had a single mother.

One issue that was noted in all our discussion was the fact that our parents either did not own land because some Black people were not allowed to or had been robbed of valuable land and moved under the Group Areas Act. It is impossible to regain what we had lost during those years. **Social status** is indicated, to me, by two things. First is whether the participant's family owned the property they lived on and secondly their parents', often the father's, and occupations. Most participants', except for Bonny and me, parent/s were teachers or public servants with stable employment. The biggest threat to family stability and protection of children was the **loss of property** due to forced removal during the Group Areas Act.

> *Black people were hardly celebrating the abstract principles of freedom when they hailed the advent of emancipation…the women and men alike wanted land, they wanted the ballot and "they were consumed with a desire for schools". (Angela Davis in Essed & Goldberg, 2002:69-70)*

The quote above shows not only what Black people wanted with their emancipation. It translates to everything that we had been denied for centuries. Few of our parents had completed secondary school to the level that white people had and they deferred their dreams and aspirations onto us, their children. Black family status often still depends on the academic achievement of the children. Education was the cornerstone hope on which our parents raised us. For many Black parents, academic achievement is not only so that their

children have a better standard of living. Academic achievement is also evidence to white people that we are equally intelligent. For many of our parents, the 1976 and 1980 student uprising created fear for our lives but also for missed opportunities. During our primary school years, we were all blissfully unaware of the political challenges and conscientisation which awaited us in high school. Sindy's introduction to high school coincided with the 1976 riots and mine four years later with the 1980 riots. Ironically, Black students were protesting the inequality of the education system, yet many lost their lives while others missed school and completing their education. These were the deflected ambitions our parents had for us:

> *I went to high school, in 1976…. At Alexander Sinton…for the most part we weren't at school…we were boycotting…and being chased by riot police. – Sindy, HDU*

The mention of **extended family** by each of the participants was significant to me because I had also had close relationships with family outside of the immediate household. Naturally, participants spoke of their parents and siblings, however, the descriptions and accounts given of aunts, uncles and cousins showed a closer than ordinary bond. Often, if participants did not share property with various households of close family, they mentioned regular visits. Where property was shared, there is the impression that parenting of all the children was shared amongst grandparents, aunts and uncles. As a group, the participants and I all share close connections with our cousins – very often sibling-like relationships.

> *My cousins are also my sisters and brothers…we grew up around my grandparents kraal, playing, fetching water, sweeping the yard…and we were all looked after by everyone in the community. – Bonnie, HAU*

> *…we were a close-knit family…aunts and uncles…cousins all grew up together…we used to meet up. (Rina)*

Sindy and Caro recall everyday family interactions in their homes:

> *And I know all my cousins – from my mother's side now – 'cause they would all pop in to my ma… and because my grandmother lived there all her life … all of us lived around there. (Sindy)*

> *So after school my friends and I would go play at our house. My mother would mix cooldrink and put out a plate with biscuits or bread. (Caro)*

> *…we would had no back-fences…this is our backyard (indicating on her drawing)… the side is not there because we'd all play with each other…and easy access. (Sindy)*

Being aware of **classism**, it affected my sense of belonging much more than racism during my early years. I realised that I did not conform to anyone's idea of what I should be: lower class at school where most of the learners were middle class; upper class in community. I do not know in which ways sexual abuse, lack of sense of belonging and having a mother who achieved despite her difficulties affected my feeling like a misfit in many domains where I interacted. My conversation with Rina, who lived in one of the classist "coloured" areas close to the township where I had grown up, on one hand confirmed my sense of not belonging as a child but also showed that not all middle class thought less of me:

> *Rina: I didn't like it cos there were all these stuck up people from Lansdowne and Pinati Estate (both also middle-class "coloured" areas close to Hanover Park), Well, you know Pinati Estate – I don't have to tell you.*
> *Jean: Yes, I do. I had a boyfriend from there whose mother threatened to disown him because he was dating a girl from Hanover Park.*
> *Rina: Exactly. Now you know exactly the classist type I'm talking about.*
> *Jean: On the other hand, I dated another guy whose family were mega-rich and his parents loved me and drove me home and didn't mind one bit.*
> *Rina: Those types were few and far between.*

Together with the loss of property was the loss of **educational opportunities** as families were moved far from better schools, public transport and social interactions. Three of the participants were able to attend some of the better schools – Bonny attended boarding school and Caro and Rina's fathers were deputy and principal, respectively at these schools. Naz, Sindy and I attended local "coloured" or Indian schools. All of us recalled dedicated teachers who went beyond the call of duty for their learners.

Race-defining characteristics such as **skin colour** and **hair texture** were important in the mixed-race communities. Bonnie and I have kinky hair while the other participants have straighter hair. Hair and skin tone were deciding factors in English-speaking "coloured" communities and impacted ones' social circle and later dating. These physical attributes were also important in high school as I recall one girl noting with pity that I was the only

one in the class for Hanover Park and "then still with *kroes* hair". One of the boys retorted that he still thought I was dateable, although he never asked me on a date.

I often wished to have a shop-bought dress but, out of necessity, my mother sewed our clothes. Sometimes she would sew labels into our clothes which she had taken from the factory she was working for at the time so that we could pretend our clothes were shop bought. There were other factors denoted that I was not of the same **class** as most of my classmates. Family status in middle-class communities were all so dependent on ones parents being married. All the participants came from what would have been considered middle-class homes and communities. Bonny did not mention that she felt as an outcast as everyone in her home village were of similar status. Where I lived, however, we were considered of higher social standing by our neighbours because we were only three people living in our house, my mother owned a car and we were English speaking.

Although not one of the participants mentioned it, **language** has always been a political and class issue amongst people of colour. All participants, except Bonny, grew up as first or second generation English-speaking. A highly likely reason this was not mentioned is that they grew up in the middle-class communities where everyone was English and also attended schools which were English-medium and thus did not feel different in either of these important spaces. In Hanover Park, however, language and ownership trumped hair texture as a marker of class (most children where I grew up in Hanover Park had kinky hair). In Hanover Park my mother's marital status mattered less as there were many single mothers in townships. What made my mother different to other mothers in Hanover Park was that she was English, drove a car and dressed well – all things which characterised her as a middle-class woman. As there were only Afrikaans medium schools in Hanover Park (being the home language of most working-class people of colour), my sister and I attended schools outside of the township, which meant that we were of higher class and thus privileged by comparison. Displaying good manners, being quiet, neat and having tidy hair had our elders imagine we were closer in behaviour and physical traits to being white, which was the ideal. These markers also denoted **class**. They could do little about our skin colours but the things they could control, our parents and grandparents did. Even our primary school teachers would reprimand our misbehaviour with "what must white people think of you?" And my Grade 3 teacher told me that with my straightened hair she was sure I could someday attract a white husband. We were also expected to ascribe to the gender rules of being lady-like:

> *My parents've got three girls, and we're very into our hair…we've got pretty dresses … that was my mother's … I don't say main role but she uhm, was a very stylish woman…. For summer we would get dresses and new shoes and socks and…and all the things and in winter we would get the same. (Sindy)*

> *I was a tomboy because I was the only girl and the youngest. I was wild. (Caro)*

> *We were not rich but we never wanted for anything…we were always cleanly dressed. (Naz)*

Safety is considered a primary issue where Black girls are concerned. Safety is easier to maintain if one was middle class and part of a close-knit family. Bonny attended boarding school and the nuns were always present. My mother worked in a factory and came home late in the evening, while my sister and I did most of the chores. Being a "latch-key kid" also meant that I was vulnerable to the sexual abuse as my mother's boyfriend was sometimes unemployed or worked night-shift. I never knew if he would be waiting for me when I got home from school. I could not avoid going home because I had chores which if left undone, my mother would be angry about. Once I was in the house, there was no escape and I had nowhere else to go in any case. Abuse is one of the main reasons that Black girls succumb to societal ills and not having a preferably woman care-giver at home makes her particularly vulnerable. In my view, these are not experiences shared by my participants who had at least one parent who was a teacher or another respected and well-paid occupation. On the other hand, I did not build a close enough relationship with any of the participants that they would share with me if they had been abused. During the interviews I sometimes felt as though these participants were the girls from my past I had most wished to be like. With a parent at home, married parents and "good" hair, I had longed to be as "perfect" and protected as they seemed.

> *…my dad was a teacher. I was the youngest of five children and my mother stayed home to take care of the family after I was born. (Caro)*

> *There was always a meal being cooked and cake and tea and people when I got home. (Sindy)*

> *My aunts and uncles…someone was always home to look after whichever children. (Rina)*
> *…and my mother was home most days but always when I got home. (Rina)*

And so we grow up with each other. So if one mother…or both parents worked then the neighbours on the other side…there are housewives…and holidays we would (be together and be watched by everyone's parents)… (Naz)

She would bake and have leftover food and people would pop in, and me, being at school, I would come home early and then there's my ma… (Sindy)

My parents owned a shop where we played. My mother and later my Ma or aunt took care of us. (Naz)

5.3.3.1 Schooling

My **primary school years** were marred by terrible memories of bad **teachers** who made me feel embarrassed for failing at mathematics, caned me and ridiculed me together with my classmates for wanting to be an airhostess because I was not skinny. I was also told that only white girls could become airhostesses. At **high school**, however, our teachers encouraged us to struggle against "gutter education" and lower expectations for ourselves and in so doing assisted me in developing a sense of control over my destiny. Most of the participants, like me, considered high school and their teachers as major influencing factors on their sense of agency and identity as well as ultimately on their subsequent academic success at university.

Few learners from poverty-stricken areas succeed through secondary education being demotivated and lured by alcohol, drugs and early sexual activity. For reasons which could be investigated, those from English homes and who attended English medium schools seemed to do better at school and this was the case for all participants in this study. Furthermore, we had our extended families interested in our well-being. Like me, all of the participants mentioned male relatives, including fathers, grandfathers and uncles, and male teachers who acted as positive role models in their educational trajectory. High school was not easy for me. I was wary of strange older males and even teachers. A few male teachers stood out for me as they were interested in me as a political and intelligent young person. I got invited, as one of very few learners, and definitely the youngest, to political social events.

5.3.4 The roles of adults in our education

Fathers, uncles, brothers and husbands who support womenfolk are often deemed weak in many traditional African societies (Bailey & Cuomo, 2008:115). This study reveals that women who receive such support may be more likely to succeed and progress. No definitive claim can be made that it is the gender of the people who supported the participants but the fact that we all mentioned this as separate from support by women, is a commentary of our underlying perceptions.

The participants also spoke about their supportive mothers, teachers and aunts but not in a way which related them directly to academic interest or success. Other than my own mother who gave me a love of reading, which in my view is the primary reason I have enjoyed some academic success, the other participants mentioned their mothers as home-makers. I hold a motto on educational success of children and have always told this to the parents and guardians of the high school learners I had taught: The more adults there are who show interest in a child's success, the more likely that child is to succeed. This study has shown me that for Black girls the role of a significant father figure played a role in our sense of our own abilities. My grandfather, uncles and some male teachers had an immense influence on my educational trajectory. Uncle Nolan always called me a "clever girl" while Uncle Peter would tell me that I wrote well and Uncle Stephen gave me money each year that I passed well.

As mentioned earlier, a big part of my socialisation happened in the homes of my cousins where we frequently visited each other's homes over weekends and holidays. My father was not present but my mother's 7 sisters were all married to men who were interested in our education. Learning to tell time, playing chess and scrabble where my uncles were included. Of course we also learned about gender-roles and how men are allowed to misbehave in ways women could not, but completion of secondary education, learning to cook and drive were important whether we were girls or boys. My uncles (the husbands of my mother's sisters) were like surrogate fathers. They were always present and interested in all of us – achievements and well-being. Even my father, whom I seldom saw, had great interest in academic achievement. Although none of these men had a university education, as children there was no option of not completing school. My maternal grandfather, who was of Zulu heritage, had taught all of his 8 daughters to drive by the time they were 16 years old. This was unheard of in many "coloured" communities. My grandfather's greatest disappointment

was that some of his daughters had not completed their high school exit exams. My grandfather cared about two things where his grand-daughters and sons were concerned: whether we had learned to drive and whether we were doing well at school. Every end of year, each cousin would take their report card to him and tears would stream down his cheeks as he congratulated us on passing with the huge luxury of individually wrapped *Quality Street* chocolates. Participants recalled similar experiences of significant male family members being interested in their well-being and education. My perception is that some excerpts show evidence of our elders living their educational dreams vicariously through us, irrespective of our gender:

> *He was my godfather. So uhm…we would often be with them and we would go for drives, he would take us to the beach, or we would go on holidays. He would take us all on educational excursions. (Sindy)*
>
> *And then…my father was deputy principal…. He's got the bigger picture in mind… (Caro)*
>
> *…my eldest brother would be taking me along and like explaining to me that buying a chocolate is not just buying a chocolate…. He was in fact a very dominant influence in terms of my political socialisation. (Caro)*
>
> *My father [was in] the education field…and I had to go to his school. (Rina)*
>
> *…my dad was a teacher. He wanted to be a Marine Biologist but was told at [HWU] coloured people…can't do Marine Biology. So what he would do is, he would take us to Wynberg Park…we'd go to the beach. Every week we'd go to Cape Point, catch fish or we'd go see the trek (pulling in of fish in at the harbour). (Caro)*

In high school I developed a desire to go to university, although no-one in my family had been. Maintaining a sense of hope for a better future was directly linked to the fact that our teachers imagined that there would be a better future for us in South Africa. They offered us a "responsive environment" acknowledging our talents and giving us the hope that we would reach beyond. Another difference for me compared to the other children in Hanover Park was that I had English as a first language and English was seen as a status language. This status separated our school, with English kids being taught differently as we had a reputation of being better behaved and more "teachable". The English kids came from areas that were considered middle class. The kids from Hanover Park's working-class families

were Afrikaans first language, and reputable as rude, skollie-agtig or gangster-like. The Afrikaans girls played netball and were considered rough. The English girls played tennis. I played neither. So within our school fence there was not only segregation of the language classes but, consequently, segregation of societal class structures.

An important part that literature played in my life is noted here and adds to the literature of this study. Choosing books about characters with which I could identify helped me in understanding myself, and where I could possibly place myself socially. I think this has possibly influenced why I believed that I could make it out of dire circumstances irrespective of the challenges I faced. As a child, for various reasons, I did not feel safe. When I was 13 years old I read a book called Zoe Delighty (published sometime in 1960s). It was about a young girl growing up in an emotionally abusive, patriarchal home. She felt the odd one out at school. At about the same time I read about a Black American girl who was growing up in a poor and broken family. I remember a story about Black American girl, Ruby (1960), who went to an all-white school. I recall reading novels by Lynne-Reid Banks (1954, 1959, 1962) about people who do not easily fit in or were left out. These characters, like me, were all at odds in their circumstances. I remember always reading the cover and these stories obviously appealed to me on a sub-conscious level. I do not remember the ending or outcome of either of the two books, but being books for teens I guess they must have had happy endings. Yuval-Davis (2006) says that belonging is about emotional attachment, identity and politics. In order for us to become active participants in the politics of a culture, we need a sense of identity, safety and status within a particular cultural group existing in a larger arena. A sense of belonging can occur without every type of commonality as long as there are enough similarities or intersections, such as race, gender, politics sympathies and projects to make us feel connected to others in that group.

Reading gave me an affinity with other girls fending for their emotional and social well-being while not fitting expected roles. For a Black girl who grew up in an extremely closed culture and society of economic, educational and societal poverty, I did well. The sad evidence of just how closed off this society is, is that few of our ex-neighbours' children had managed to move out of Hanover Park and thirty years later many are still living in the same houses, with their children and grandchildren under the same conditions. Adams (2006:522) says that "in terms of the lived experiences of the globe's poorest and wealthiest, the distinction between the fields has increased and the transposability between them is

decreasingly viable for the overwhelming majority of the poor, leaving them adrift and bereft". Kaplan (2011) iterates that while few children read, the majority who do, read for pleasure. He states that the next yet connected reason is that they will read if they can relate to the "social significance" of the literature.

I feel that reading has also given me a better understanding of myself, my relatives and community members and why they reasoned the way they did about themselves, people of colour in general and Black Africans. While I do not excuse racist behaviour in any form, I understand how the Apartheid system influenced the dominant dialogue. Once again, this set me apart from the very societies I so wished to belong to as a child. I find that my education was an estranging factor in the opposite direction to where I had started out (DeLeon, 2010).

5.3.5 Transitional years

The tumultuous period between 1976 and 1982 in our country's political history coincided with a common transitional age for the group of participants and me. Four of us recalled a momentous event occurring around the age of twelve. For me it was the year I recalled as being finally freed from sexual abuse. He had lived with us from when I was six, started abusing me a year later and moved out of our house for good when I turned twelve. It was at this time of the Group Areas Act that the historic District Six forced removals was fully enforced and other areas such as Rondebosch (Black River and Liesbeeck), Constantia, Somerset West and the Strand. The transitional years between child and adolescent, primary school and high school happen at the age of 12 or 13. I recall that it was at this time that I stopped trying to fit in with the in-group at school which I was part of but never felt quite part of. I was 13 years old when I realised the impact of being classified as "coloured" or white. The direct impact on my family is that some of my mother's cousins applied to classify as white and estranged themselves from the rest of the family. Those, like my mother, who did not apply were classified as "mixed" in their identity documents because one parent passed as white (my grandmother) and my grandfather listed as race "unknown". Years later when my mother applied for a lost identity document, she was reclassified "coloured". The family members who applied and succeeded in reclassifying white were able to retain their homes in the areas newly demarcated for "whites only". Listening to Caro's story and how they lost their property in Black River (now Rondebosch) affected me deeply because my mother's family had been able to live on as they passed as white.

For Caro, this had a profound impact on her future financial status as well as her educational prospects. The result of being classified as "coloured" played out most decidedly in our future educational and job prospects with the aim of maintaining our lower status. The result of this was that we were moved further from good schools and our parents had to choose between spending their wages on their children traveling or having their children to attend township schools' inadequate facilities. The data from the interviews show that in our memories events which occurred around the ages 12 to 13 were meaningful to more than only one of us:

> *…this was in Rondebosch (family-owned properties) and the Group Areas Act…we moved, when I was about 12, to different places and the family was scattered to different parts. So ja, so this was the coloured world…. I still hate that word. (Rina)*

> *From the start of primary school I was bullied by this one girl…because I was the youngest and the smallest, so she could kind of control…and then I remember in Std 5 I said I can't do this anymore (be her bullied-friend)…. She literally, I mean can you imagine me as a 12 year old…standing up to this bully (Caro)*

> *So we left home…for better schooling, to a convent boarding school…. I wasn't unhappy there but I wasn't with my family. (Bonny)*

> *My world had always just been my world before then but at that stage – we started hearing of clashes between Black and white people. (Me: How old were you. About?) Wait. [I was] going in to high school. 13? (Bonny)*

> *Important to say this was 1976…. I'm looking for the word – of my high school career…barely 13 years old. My introduction to high school…I think I matured immediately um…from a very protected environment… (Sindy)*

> *My father taught at the school where I went [until the age of 12] in District Six and I wanted to go to one of the schools in Wynberg high school…but we were moved far [from these school]… (Rina)*

Critical thinking and "critical dialogues" lead to debunking of myths about race, gender and class, which we are led to believe about ourselves and others; no longer as crowds but as individuals with an appreciated view on society (Freire & Shor, 1987a:167). By critically engaging with myself, my position in society and narrating it, I give myself away as a non-conformist and also a resistor of authority. I relay, in narrative form, my trajectory as

locating my authority as a biased researcher while respectfully acknowledging the experience of discomfort this may cause others within the "cultural constructions" (Tierney, 1998). Qualitative research is a view of a social reality where there are many actors and the responsibility of the researcher is to be "reflecting the aspirations of the people" (Freire, 1970).

5.4 Childhood constraints and enablers

The conversations show that the participants did not see the constraints of their past as constraints but rather spoke of them as just part of their lives. There was little bitterness except when discussing the loss of family land. The reason for this may be that the reality is very tangible. The properties which were forcibly taken are in areas we still drive by but are now owned by rich white people.

The following constraints emerged from the data of the participants:

i) Moving away from cousins and other family (5+R)
ii) Losing family home and/or sense of community (4+R)
iii) Added financial burden after forced removals (4)
iv) Having to travel long distances to school and amenities (3+R)
v) Lacking or being robbed of a sense of agency (2+R)
vi) Needing to be politicised early (4+R)
vii) Studying at HAU (2)
viii) Being bullied (1+R)
ix) Being poor (R)
x) Being abused (R)

The following emerged as childhood enablers:

i) Involved parents and siblings (5)
ii) Strong family bonds (5)
iii) Being politicised early in life (4+R)
iv) Educated parents (4)
v) Camaraderie at school (4+R)
vi) Sense of belonging (5)
vii) 2nd generation secondary and tertiary students (4)
viii) Audacious personalities (4+R)
ix) Studying at HDU (3+R)

x) Developing strong sense of agency after age 12/13 (3+R)

These enablers and constraints, together with a strong sense of identity, play important roles in how we later deal with constraints and what we later perceive as enablers. A strong sense of agency may be an important motivator in recognising, addressing and relating to issues with others in our institutions. While I realise that the participants may not have mentioned all of the enablers and constraints they encountered, these are the most common and recount what is in the literature on what influences the success and failure of Black women academics.

5.5 Navigating the constraints in institutions as places of employment

Politics and fear of retribution are issues that still influence our narratives. Only the participants teaching at HAU often asked for assurance that they will not be identifiable in the study. Their stories of experiences and perceptions of HEIs where they work and study are muted. Experiences and actions of staff seem to be largely determined by the culture of the institution evidenced in the conversations with participants. Caro, at a HDU, shares her experience, as a departmental head:

> *…if you look around that table (indicating the boardroom table in her drawing) and see that you're only one of three females in such a position and it is predominantly white men. You would expect me to feel it, but I don't. I don't feel it here…as I had when I worked at.*
>
> *And this other (white) guy that walked in now said something about "you and your other half". He was referring to LL, a white male. UU a white female and me coloured female – in the department we are all senior staff. I don't feel it in terms of gender and I don't feel it in terms of race. – Caro, HDU*

By comparison, Naz, finds that, like her, other Black academics at her HAU feel out of place or unwelcome. Despite having appropriate structures in place, the culture does not lend itself to a sense of belonging:

> *They are often Black female academics…. Many people, Black people, seek out this similarity. They come to a seminar to raise these issues. I find that interesting when there is a transformation office with people who are supposed to help with these issues. That people still seek other avenues. Why are we not using the structures in place? What is it that people figure out about the structures that actually do not make it credible?*

Gender politics determine that women often respond to demands by attempting to attend to everything. Most women are carrying the load at work and at home and carrying the workload home (Mabokela, 2017) is considered as something "women do". At work, women who have achieved some measure of success seldom escape being the most vulnerable to bearing the brunt and burden while her male counterparts seem to progress with less of these concerns.:

> *And what I do is I just absorb everything. Which I think many women do. I think it is a gender thing. – Caro, HBU*

Black women in our institutions also find the responsibility of proving themselves cumbersome. There are elements to our job as academics, which do not concern white women:

> *Each time I walk into a meeting or the library at this institution, subtle and unsubtle innuendos make me aware that others perceive me as admin [administrative staff]. (Jean)*

5.5.1 Uncomfortable comfort

Interactions within academic spaces are where we share and grow our scholarship, academic hopes and achievements. Academic work is highly individualistic and isolating. This becomes a constraint when we perceive others as enjoying inclusion while we feel excluded. In her drawing, Bonny marks her interactions with colleagues, the majority of whom are white, as constraining to her success. In the same drawing she indicates "engagement with students is for me the thought space that I work in", as enabling. Furthermore, she uses the following words, which on their own are neither positive nor negative, to describe her experiences in this space:

> *…if I have to think about what actually led to consolidating my, my career or my identity as a lecturer it's how I feel in those spaces. (Bonny)*

5.5.2 Belonging

Finding spaces where we have a sense of belonging is a highly underestimated and often misunderstood factor in the success of Black women academics. There are nuances and subtleties, which are hard to define. Feelings of alienation are unexplained often because they sound ridiculous to those who do not experience them. The factors which influence the sense of belonging is often only recognisable by what one no longer feels if it has been felt before – as when one moves between institutions, or by comparison of how one views a colleague being treated and you are not:

> *You just don't belong in the same way. So there's an alienation both in terms of one's discipline then there's also a power separation in relation to one's history. (Rina)*

> *We can see how people are racketing up their scores. How they are enabled to do that! So I get completely left off all of that. I don't have a mentor and ja… (Rina)*

Once I raised the issue of my not achieving senior status after 8 years while a white colleague in a similar position was promoted within 3 years of being appointed. Other people of colour had told me that they saw her being offered opportunities to sit in meetings or head projects we had not been offered. In an attempt at transparency, I met with a director to discuss this unfairness, without denying the heavy administrative work the white colleague had done, highlighting my own very different, initiatives and theoretical input. The explanation offered was that it is *the position* and not *the person* which was promoted. Participants explain similar incidences and had I not heard their stories years earlier, I may not have recognised or been able to define what had happened at my own workplace:

> *The thing is that we've got a mentoring process that happens… So an academic man who will promote them in their career, will get them on the right committees. (Rina)*
> *Also there's that fast-tracking of particular individuals. (Rina)*

5.6 Perceptions and interplay: The institution, colleagues and students

Institutions are made up of its structure, culture, as well as the relationships amongst staff and students. Humans' actions and reactions are mostly determined by their past experiences of society. The many facets determine what experiences are perceived as enabling or constraining in academia. An institution may be viewed as being mostly enabling until one or a few people delve beyond the surface by deeper reflection of her experiences:

> *…the most difficult thing is there's one landscape on the surface and another from above. Right, so it seems like it has a lot going for it in terms of its systems. That it works so well in terms of opportunities, the funding…[yet] one is almost always hovering. – Naz, HAU*

One of the participants who has experience of both kinds of institutions (HBU and HWU) explains the differences. She says of her previous institution, which is known for its leftist assignments of accepting Black students during the Apartheid years, she encountered too

few colleagues who even considered the context of poor students and staff from impoverished backgrounds:

> *And that (experiences and perceptions) spills over into interpersonal relations. So there at [HWU] you can find a corner of like-minded people politically and concerned about poorer students and you can get by but it is not what permeates the institution – Caro, HDU*

On the other hand, speaking about her experiences at her current HBU, her perception is that colleagues are quite the opposite. She also refers to the gender/race issues and says does not feel that being a Black woman amongst Black men counts as a disfavour:

> *I come to the conclusion that here [HBU] race and gender for me is not a big thing. Even though (as a Black woman amongst mostly Black men) I am very much in the minority even here, but it is not a big factor.*

One participant explains that the amount of time it took for her to accept her position at an HWU may have detracted from her ambitions to achieve seniority. She became depressed at the thought of having to go to work each day at the white institution:

> *I think it took me about four years to settle…into how I understand this university, how it functions as a space…this space represents the fact that sometimes you know driving, I would just wish that one of those planes would fall on the N2 and close the space! – Bonny, HAU*

Many departments reflect what is static and why transformation is so difficult to achieve, i.e., white male dominance and Black women teaching full first-year classes. The superficiality of policy and not enforcing practice is a hindrance. One participant explains why changing the status quo at certain institutions is so difficult:

> *So transformation can be done in a very superficial way…that has been quite a constraint…so if it ticks the box, it means it is done. So whether things really change doesn't seem to be a concern. But the dominant thinking underpinning all of that is to maintain the stability. – Naz, HAU*

The quote above speaks about the specific institutional culture while the following reflects what happens in close work groups at the same institution:

> *I'm a Black woman that they just didn't understand who I was, what I was about, what I had to offer. But the others (white men) got that [support and mentorship] but not me…. It's very clear. We can see who's next in line for head of department. – Rina, HAU*

When interrogating culture patterns of behaviour emerge and the outcomes can be pre-determined. Our levels of (dis)comfort and sense of (non)belonging are partly our awareness of our own positionality within a culture, comparing self to others as well as perceiving how others relate to us. A confident sense of identity and belonging in one culture, perhaps from childhood, may determine how we react to situations but cannot account for how other people will respond to us or that they may see us as individuals:

> *I think, some have very limited stereotypes, especially of Black people…. I think that they have put me into a box so they have certain expectations of who I am. – Rina, HWU*

Related to perceptions of who fully belong and succeed in HEIs is being culturally attuned to the habits and mannerisms of the other. This means choosing between assimilating or standing out as the other. We can then also either ignore or veer towards those like us who are left feeling marginalised. Some of us will recognise but not address the issues. This participant explains how this influences how we engage and are engaged with:

> *So there's some people who don't engage with me in the same way they do with others. And it's also a very much socially conservative. And I mean seriously socially conservative…. It's reactionary as far as I'm concerned in many respects because there's this separation… – Rina, HWU*

One participant, who has worked at two institutions in the same city, reveals the contextual structural issues but notes that she prefers to be at the institution with economic challenges than at a historically white and advantaged institution:

> *I've got actually a very conducive working space. Even though at times there have been uhh…even though in faculty at times there have been a lot of instability (due to financial constraints) – Caro, HBU*

In the same interview, she speaks of her earlier academic experience at a HWU compared to her current position. This highlights the fact that because of Apartheid differential funding of institutions, economic challenges persist for HBU:

> *So there's less frustration there (HWU) because stuff is working… So simple things here (at HBU) would be a source of frustration, like tutorial venues (teaching on the steps) – which work on that (HWU) side (adequate, well-equipped small venues). – Caro, HBU*

The varying structural differences between HBU and HWU are mentioned above and below as the lack of resources as thirty years after studying at this HBU, current students and lecturers (still mostly Black) suffer the same inconveniences as I did:

> *Our venues can sometimes be constraining because they're not conducive to small group discussions. And the prefabs (fabricated units) get really hot – Sindy, HBU*

Relationships with colleagues are either conducive or constraining to progressing and trust in one's colleagues is vital to job satisfaction and participants express their experiences:

> *We've got very different opinions but there's very a high level of trust. So there's not this thing of so-and-so being malicious. – Caro, HBU*

> *So I feel like I have an ally in there. But I feel that I have a very good relationship with all. – Caro, HBU*

On the other hand, Naz has a different experience with trusting her colleagues:

> *They really seem like they liked the idea of fresh blood and new perspectives et cetera, but after a while I thought ok, everybody prefers safe territory, everyone is just in there safe boxes and they say what is required but also not much going to change there. – Naz, HWU*

However, how these translate to reality for individuals is evident in how these visions and missions play out.

5.6.1 Carrying the burden of others

While I am sure that some women are partnered by men who see us as equal, this does not leave us less over-burdened. More so than white women, Black women may tend to compensate to not seem weak or out of control in our environment. Bearing witness to minorities being treated unjustly or not belonging, reminds me of my own powerlessness as a Black girl child. People react differently to similar triggers or may not find the same triggers, and from our past, we have learned different mechanisms for dealing within our contexts. This section deals with the themes from the literature and how we perceive and manage in our various contexts.

For Caro, the bullying scenario plays out differently but it still leads to an inner conflict between what she knows she should do and how she reacts. Not belonging can take various forms. For Caro, being the youngest in her class meant that she was

constantly bullied and that this impacts on how she operates in her current role as head of department:

> *Caro: If a subordinate drops the ball I'm going to probably just pick the ball up myself rather than call you in and say "You dropped the ball, that's unacceptable. You need to do X." I'm probably just going to do it myself. Which I think stems from that (indicating bullying on drawing).*

She further assigns her reaction to being a woman. She is currently one of only two women in a top position in her faculty:

> *Caro: I'm sure it does (add to my stress)…. So one colleague would kind of barricade themselves so that people can't penetrate and overload them. Another colleague would maybe be more aggressive…. And what I do is I just absorb everything. Which I think many women do. I think it is a gender thing. Which means I just take everything home with me and I try resolve it at home…. And I'll just fix everything myself.*

Rina says that she often also feels that she does not belong in her academic department and faculty:

> *You just don't belong in the same way…. So, there's an alienation both in terms of one's discipline then there's also a power separation in relation to one's history. In the kind of department, I work in and in the faculty, people are generally politically and socially conservative.*

Rather than confront the issue, she finds recourses:

> *What I have with in relation to my students – they're postgraduate students…that is where I find most of my satisfaction as an academic*.

…and keeps company with other marginalised people:

> *And the few of us that are on the kind of periphery, we have conversations together.*

Participants who mentioned feelings of exclusion from childhood seemed to remember foremost when these experiences were based on classism. The perceptions of being viewed as of a different class by our peers impacted us most. Messaging was innocently repeated from what they must have heard from adult conversations. At the level of our current contexts, however, it is a perception of field but mostly of race.

The perceptions of where we belong or not, is not necessarily one-sided perception and is context specific:

> *It is the others, the ones who just don't know what I'm doing make me feel like I'm performing farm and country stuff. – Rina, HWU*

> *So this is a very collegial space over here (indicating the small dept on the drawing) that we have here (indicating the offices where she sits). – Caro, HBU*

White and Black people have perceptions of where Black women belong which lead them to intentionally or unintentionally making the "other" feel incompetent or unwelcome in certain positions:

> *I find that because people, I think, have very limited stereotypes, especially of Black people. Or people who are different from them. I think that they have put me into a box so they have certain expectations of who I am. Or the stereotyping is created. So there's some people who don't engage with me in the same way they do with others. – Rina, HWU*

The comparison at departmental level of what Rina experiences at HWU and what Sindy and Caro finds at HBUs, is vastly different:

> *Our HoD is very facilitating and enabling.*
> *We have a teaching and learning specialist. I'm also the rep and so I represent our department in the faculty. So it take all the teaching and learning issues in our department, I take it to the faculty meeting. (Sindy)*

> *See I put myself here in the boardroom with the HoDs. That's the executive. But essentially it is between the department and that room which represents for me, I suppose, the faculty… – Caro, HBU*

Rather late in my research (June 2016) I came upon the work of Gayatri Spivak's visit to South Africa. While I could not attend her lectures, I read that she spoke directly to the heart of my ideas on decolonisation about "disrupting from the inside", expanding and reforming rather than breaking boundaries. My realisation that all that I wanted was for others not to feel my reality but to know that mine was a reality.

So I argue in my research that other research positioned outside of the Black woman academic experience can rightly assess the numbers from a quantitative stance and offer statistics and assumptions about the effects of discrimination and marginalisation from dominant discourses as reasons for the low rate of success. Furthermore, ethnographic-type research can be well-meaning but will still not report from the subjective stance and thus,

ethically, it is not acceptable to write the history of people when they themselves are unable to critique the researchers' reporting. Autobiographical work can demonstrate empirically to the individual experience without theorising or testing theories on their experience. To do an autoethnographic study is to interrogate the empirical from an insider's view. Using cameos in an autoethnography is to offer additional views to one's stance in order to cross-examine to show that assumptions cannot be made about other's experiences based on one's own views. Employing the narratives of cameos in my research is much more that adding other voices to my own narrative or implying that this way of doing autoethnography is speaking on behalf of, or in agreement with, other Black woman academics. It is a means of presentation to authoritative research that it does not fill the gaps and that every new research should open further gaps to make space for new ways of research to fill and open. My intention has been to radically inquire (Clough & Nutbrown, 2005) with the purpose of unsettling the margins as opposed to closing a gap and then showing up further gaps.

5.7 Framing the Black woman academic

In 1983 I was 17 years old when I worked at a top chain store in Cape Town. I started dating (illegal at the time) a white boy who was the same age. We were both casual workers. On payday we compared our cheques and the next day I went to take it up with the white manager that I was being paid less. I knew the reason was because I was Black but she did not acknowledge that and merely adjusted my wages because I had come to ask. I then asked her about the other casual workers' pay. She told me that I was a nice, well-groomed girl and that is why I got the job that many others would have been happy to have. I left soon after.

In 2008 I had been invited via email as a writing consultant to a science department meeting at a HAU. My first name is a common Afrikaner male name and my surname is not identifiable as a Black surname. No-one had met me before, they only knew of me as someone who assisted the department's students in writing their research. My presence was not noted as everyone else (white males) were passed a register to sign and I was not. I felt invisible and I decided to act like I was invisible. Ten minutes after the meeting was scheduled to begin, someone enquired as to whom they were waiting for. The chair looked at the list and said "Ons wag nog vir Jhaan." (We are waiting for Jhaan – Afrikaans/French pronunciation for male Jean). As he said the name he looked around the room and skipped me. Not only was I invisible as a Black woman, but white male is obviously the default.

Contrary to arguments that fate determines or that we are destined to be where we are, I would argue that there is an unmonitored reflex in holding back Black women in favour of white males. Rina reports on two separate instances in her career. The first is of her working in the private sector as a 21-year-old and the reason she left the private sector to join the university. The second instance is 25 years later at a HAU:

> *Because the one white male who was working with us as students, got to wear a suit and the rest of us had to wear uniform…. But he then also got to be a trainee manager and I was refused. I was way better than he was. Ask anybody who worked with me there. – Rina, HAU*

> *The thing is that we've got a mentoring process that happens… grey beard. So an academic man who will promote them in their career, will get them on the right committees…. I don't have one. Firstly, I'm a woman which I think is the one thing…. And the fact that I'm a Black woman… – Rina, HAU*

Divala (2014) says that some of us live "unexpected lives". I argue that white people have moved from consciously undermining Black women to subconsciously continuing to make it hard. We remain mostly invisible as when we were servants in households:

> *There is no place for the Bantu in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour… – Hendrik Verwoerd, Minister of Native Affairs, 1966*

> *…but there's no active undermining or you can see who people are. Their identities are quite clear. It's something to do with the composition of mainly men with a common experience of history and politics so on. – Rina, HAU, 2016*

I would be described by some as "coloured" because I am of mixed Black, Asian and white heritage. Others will describe me as motherly. I have given birth to two children. There are those who say that I am not really wifely because I do not cook or clean every day and my academic work has always been more important than being described as "marriage material" and fitting the role of home-maker. I have also often been told that I am "not like other "coloureds" for various reasons by people who hold in their heads a particular definition of what "coloured" culture in South Africa should or should not be. In South African higher education context, a Black or "coloured" woman as an academic is not usual. In the contextual space, as it is limited to the particular research, race and gender take on more relevance than mere universal concepts.

For most, race is identifiable by tone of skin and facial features and gender is identifiable by the presence or lack of certain biological or bodily features. So, we might offer physical descriptions, however much these physical appearances may differ from person to person of the same race and gender, and that studies prove that beneath the skin there are no real differences amongst races and that we are much more the same than we are different. What is gender and what is race? These questions are posed by Hasslanger (2000) in her paper theorising the need for these distinctions in academia. Clearer definitions may depend and therefore differ on the socio-cultural context and these become clearer when we investigate experiential data. The definitions become more politicised and context-dependent.

Domain of discomfort has always been a default position in my life. The reason, I think, for undertaking this research was to tell my own story of rising out of one such place and simply entering another. I have seldom felt like a fully-fledged member of any groups I have encountered. These feelings, however, have never stopped me from entering these domains because often it is what led from where I had just been before. So the literature for this study starts with searching for writings on others who experienced the same and then looking for the theoretical approach to support these kinds of writing and research. I wanted to do more than only look at the domains and the feelings. I wanted to investigate what about the dominant cultures were so opposing to cause others to feel out of place. I also wanted to look at the perceptions of the out of place and how this influenced the interactions. Further to that, I felt it necessary to delve into their past to find out what has led the types of persons to develop such identities and perceptions. With this in mind, I extract material evidence as support from the literature and I later use details from the narratives of the other participants to add to the discussion of themes, either as similarities or difference:

> *…so it's an institution that's good to be associated with, it seems like a good institution to be a part of. But the kind of, it's lacking in some ways in terms of humanity. (Rina)*
>
> *There's always that burden of proof… and it's like you are always hovering. – Naz, HWU*
>
> *You just don't belong in the same way. So there's an alienation both in terms of one's discipline then there's also a power separation in relation to one's history. – Rina, HWU*

Being demotivated to learning comes with the territory of growing up in poverty and oppression, however, when you sense belonging and feel supported towards advancing, it

makes a difference to interplay. Agency naturally plays a role but the motivating factor is feeling like one of the group:

> *We have a dep-dean teaching and learning. She's also my mentor and also very supportive. – Sindy, HBU*

> *One has to fight for support because it's not there automatically. The thing is that we've got a mentoring process that happens. As some of my colleagues call it, their grey beard. It's mainly men. So an academic man who will promote them in their career, will get them on the right committees. – Rina, HWU*

Motivation and a desire to succeed is an essential element to academic achievement (Masitsa, 2008). I do not recall ever not wanting to go to school and I failed to understand my peers' lack of desire. Perhaps it was the fact that I could read well but I could not do Mathematics or understand accounting very well. Yet I did not once stay out of those classes or attempt to perform. Contrary to Masitsa (2008), my high school teachers, while active in the struggle against "gutter education", did not neglect our learning. We felt supported and mentored. At HEIs this could be as much specific to the department or workgroup as it is the institution. It can also be dependent on what roles Black women are perceived to be "better" suited to:

> *Uhm, and colleagues have always been enabling in that environment because I've had colleagues as mentors when I first got here.*

> *Now I've got colleagues as mentors but with regard to research… Understanding university culture and I'm still not sure if I were to say, if I had to…if I had to define what this institution's culture is, I wouldn't come up with a very definite uhm definition.*

> *But how I look at myself in that space is very much in the margins and not perhaps because I'm marginalised but also because uhm, most of the time I feel it has very little to do with what I do here. I understand that there are established and entrenched practises. – Bonny, HWU*

5.8 Gaining access outside of the frame

Towards creating a conducive and "care-full" climate not only for lecturers (Herman, 2015) and other academic researchers, it is essential to look at the whole person. The kind of working environment which is the aim is one which supports individuals in their needs for growth, which is wished for all colleagues in the institution (Van Schalkwyk *et al.*, 2015;

Leibowitz, Vorster & Ndebele, 2016; Leibowitz, Bozalek, Farmer, Garraway, *et al.*, 2017). Unfortunately, I have heard many stories of where aspirations are not achieved, whether this is due to management issues or issues of agency. Can academics' experiences in a particular institution be blamed on either one of these factors? If perceptions are that management and work groups are not conducive for advancement, consideration needs to be given for acknowledgement that agency plays a role. The particular intersectionality of gender, class, background and age for every academic needs to be examined through reflection by the individual:

> *So I could only speak of being sidelined if I actively tried to yes to engage and then it wasn't working. But I've been a very passive participant uhm, so I've placed myself. Uhm so I can't speak about…. I feel very defeated, because I haven't tried. And perhaps I haven't tried because I don't, I don't see how it's going to work or I don't see what I'm going to do. – Bonny, PAU*

The institutions are not always perceived as a place where we inherently belong or find a place where we belong:

> *I think that we're not taking enough care to ensure there's proper career progression for people and that they feel like their contribution is valued. – Rina, HWU*

I never wished to be rich or white. I only wanted to be free from the constraints and the powerlessness I saw in those around me. I was always conscious of the constraints. For me freedom meant spending Saturday morning at a Rondebosch flea market and floor to ceiling bookshelves filled with books I would read, a huge couch, dogs and woods to wander in. But for that I would have had to be rich and white.

> *Sindy: I didn't really allow ambition to drive me uh, it wasn't a driving force for me…*

5.9 Political awakening

> *It is a fact that this term ["coloured"] has been unsatisfactory as a reference and a naming of the people of combined African and European blood. If these people are a product of the coming together of Africans who are Africans and Dutch and English settlers who insist they are also Africans and Afrikaners, how come, or why is it that the product of their joint loins are…not Africans or Europeans? – Kendrick Brown, 2000:198*

I chose the above quote not so much because it is about being "coloured", but because it is about being accepted and belonging. I am African because this is the country of my birth, not because I feel that there is any sense of loyalty towards me by any one group of people. Similarly, and for varying reasons, many Black Africans, i.e., not mixed race or Indian, must feel that they do not belong in some spaces of South Africa. The intersections of class, race, culture and gender identity means that we are distanced from the centre.

The start of high school was a political awakening for many of us:

> *In high school I come face to face with Apartheid. (Sindy)*

We were often lead by teachers or older siblings or even family to political consciousness:

> *This is like uhhh 1983/84 (12 years old). So that would be in between over here (indicating on the drawing the school). So 1983/4 my eldest brother would be taking me along and like explaining to me that buying a chocolate is not just buying a chocolate but how the worker is being exploited, where the chocolate is being made… (Caro)*

> *We didn't know what for at first but when we transitioned to high school we soon learnt of the politics from the other sisters. My world had always just been my world before then but at that stage – we started hearing of clashes between Black and white people. (Bonny)*

As a Grade 8 learner, I was one of the youngest followers and one of very few girls who joined. I don't know why I joined, I felt swept up when others did not. At the school, however, there was no sense of wrong-doing. Even our very strict principal, Mr van Wyk, was in support of those teachers and learners going on the marches. I think they all felt it was time, many of them had been affected by the Group Areas removals and years of inequality in housing, health care and disparity in schooling for Black people.

The participants in this study were all aware of and affected by the school disruptions and many became activists. A few of the participants were not actively involved but still affected:

> *Well, we carried on learning and the nuns carried on teaching in our protected little convent school, but they awakened in us a sense of caution which intensified over the years as we grew older… (Bonny)*

> *1976–1980 I'm at high school… What happens in 1980 is we have a heavy boycott for several months. (Sindy)*

For those of us who did become actively involved, it seems that our teachers had been influential in our awareness:

> *…when we transitioned to high school we soon learned of the politics from the other sisters (high school teachers). My world had always just been my world before then but at that stage – we started hearing of clashes between Black and white people. (Bonny)*

The transition from primary to high school at the age of 12 or 13 is beautifully portrayed by one of the interviewees:

> *My eyes are opened to the lifestyle of other people. Sunnyside is a product of Apartheid but everybody comes from the same place. In high school difference comes in. Awareness is opened with a can opener in 1976…. Baptism of fire is high school (Sindy)*

The effects of the boycotts and activism for an equal education was detrimental to many more of our peers. Very few of my peers from our working-class community remained in school until mid-high school. After the student riots, even more dropped out because they could not make up the backlog of the classes they had missed. The exact opposite of what we were fighting for happened to so many of this generation. Yet, the interviewees remained:

> *Well, others gradually over those riotous years, dropped out but that would never have been an option with my family. It is just not what was done, you know… (Rina)*

> *I think it is important to say that in 1976… I went to high school, in 1976…. At Alexander Sinton…so for the most part we weren't at school…we were boycotting…and being chased by riot police… (Sindy)*

> *Also at High School…there was a very dynamic group of teacher activists… (Rina)*

The most relevant of all of the issues is the sense of belonging while transcending, continuously transcending. Divala (2014) interrogates the notions of what belonging means for Black women in higher education. To me this is an opportune creation of opening up spaces in research theory and methodology by stretching and reshaping the margins. Political culture at home and school affects achievement linking to sense of self in children. Environment plays a great role in the notion of self for children from poorer backgrounds

where they see evidence of lack of autonomy in many of their role models. It seems that for these children, an unfriendly and unforgiving environment has more power over what people can accomplish in their lives. Coleman *et al.* (1966, cited in Anderson, Turner & Heath, 2016) say that whether the "environment will respond to reasonable efforts" affects the belief that what happens is controlled elsewhere and not in individual power. Thus "[h]aving experienced an unresponsive environment, the virtues of hard work, of diligent and extended effort toward achievement appear unlikely to be rewarding".

The drop-out rate amongst the poorer learners is high. As a child many of my peers from my neighbourhood did not attend high school after completing primary education. I carried on to complete school, becoming estranged from them and even to fear some as they turned to gangsterism. However, loyalty meant that some of my friends-turned-gangsters would protect me from others as I would walk through the dark alleys to and from university.

Our English teacher allowed us to write class essays about political interests. However, when we wrote our school exit exams for the external examiners we should write non-political imaginative pieces "to please the education department". Our high school teachers expected us to catch up any classes we had missed due to boycotts and school riots. I followed through with this throughout my university studies, being an activist but never neglecting my studies.

5.10 Navigating university as a student

What gives us a sense of whether we belong or not?

As a child I did not know how to respond to questions and comments about our house having only one bedroom or with no hot running water. At school the children from middle-class areas mostly transferred their parents' attitudes towards anyone from Hanover Park. Assumptions were made about me being from a single mother family. Although the participants interviewed all came from middle-class, "normal" families, I learned that my perceptions were not accurate and that they were not immune to classism.

The following exchange between Rina and myself reveals how prejudiced we become in our perceptions due to past experiences. Rina and I are within the same age group and as a child I would have viewed her as "better off" as she was middle-class. My first impression of her, however, was based only on my past negative experience. I had dated a Rishaad who

was from the same middle-class area where Rina grew up. His mother did not like the idea of him dating someone from Hanover Park. I learned that not only was I wrong in my assessment of Rina, but I had also forgotten a positive experience I had with another family from this suburb. I later also dated Connor from the same area as Rishaad and Rina. His family was probably one of the richest "coloured" families in the Western Cape. They were generous and accepting of me. Rina too found some of the people as classist as I had recalled:

> *Rina: I didn't like it cos there were all these stuck-up people from Lansdowne and Pinati Estate. You know Pinati Estate? ...you know exactly the classist type I'm talking about.*

After this conversation, I am uncertain as to whether Rina and I shared the same mistaken perception of the people from this community or whether it is only a few, like her, who shared my feelings. On further introspection, I remembered that I had had two other boyfriends from this area and their parents had not minded that I was from Hanover Park. Similarly, I later learned that my cousins did not think less of my sister and me. They were probably influenced by their parents' as I was influenced by my mother's perceptions that her sisters judged her for divorcing my father and creating an "unstable" foundation for us.

Adults within cultures influence children's notions of inferiority or superiority. Feeling excluded is a social wound for the marginalised person. Attempts to be included or to improve our social conditions often meant that we were not aware of the social notions we bore. Rina, although she was aware of the classist nature of her middle-class suburb, seemed not to recognise that she thought of the whites-only university she attended and currently worked at as better than the "bush college" I had attended. Class and race seem then to be complex and inextricably linked in our thinking of ourselves as compared to the other:

> *I never thought of going to a "coloured" university. It had to be a white university. I was very much anti the bush university. (Rina, HAU)*

Slipping through loopholes to attend a white university was possibly seen as an act of defiance by some Black students and their parents. However, because our parents and teachers had not attended universities, no-one could have prepared these students as first generation students, for the severe othering they would experiences in these spaces. Entering and navigating the whites-only spaces could be damaging to the soul:

> *We had never been that side of the freeway…except you know when I was at primary school, when we lived there (before the forced removals)…we didn't know how to get onto the campus.*

Perpetrators may not realise the extent of the damage or length of time it stays with one. Not only does the sense of being identified as "not one of us" stay long after the perpetrator may have forgotten the incidents but following events which serve as reminders are perceived in the same way. Bernstein (2005) indicates that those previously marginalised do not, on being accepted or tolerated, suddenly identify as being of that culture. Those who had been privileged by the system should acknowledge not only their role in the exclusion but also that they possibly unconsciously continue in their practices.

We sometimes visited my mother's Swiss friend in the upmarket, white suburb of Sea Point. I noticed mother's and her friend's anxiety must have been more for my sister and me who were obviously 'non-white'. The only Black people allowed in the building were domestic workers and they were not allowed to use the lifts or bring their children to the building. My mother had once been told by a bus driver that she could pass to sit in the front of the bus but not her children.

The participants' narratives indicate that racial awareness and identity occurred later in our pre-teen or teen years. The politics of identity and how it affected my family is etched in my mind. I felt that my family had a kind of ill-placed pride in their white ancestry while never speaking about their Black heritage. Our blue-eyed cousins' hair and eyes were always admiringly commented on. This legacy of racial shame perpetuated by our parents is a direct consequence of Apartheid and similar other global inferences that white is better than brown which is better than Black. Only in high school did any form of racial awareness and racism impact us consciously.

At high school and university, I was more exposed to racial difference through my educators, both Black and white, who were part of the struggle against the inequalities in South Africa. It was through higher education that I came to question the power that being "whiter" had over people like those in my family and how people of colour struggle with belonging alongside each other by denying and being denied "membership". Reading the literature helped me to understand people, but at the same time to revile the structure and its influencing the dominant culture which determines who belongs where and who does not. I still did not feel that I belonged anywhere. Bernstein (2005) suggests that racial

classification is a socio-political ploy to oppress and exercise power over others. Within the CRT framework, I realise that the social constructs of race and how people of colour are viewed and often view themselves as less or better than another race, is what needs to be addressed within the narratives of especially Black women in academia (Essed, 1992; Brown, 2000).

Choosing my own affiliation to culture was one way of preserving for myself an identity I chose (hooks, 1994; Iskander & Rustom, 2010). It should be encouraged that children embrace their ancestry and not carry a sense of pride or shame in any of it. When I was a student in 1988 I went shopping with friends and we walked into a Polish jewellery store owner in town who asked me "what nationality I am". I told her that I am South African. She asked if I would like to work in her store. When I completed my studies and left for abroad, she told me that she always thought a "coloured" girl like me could marry a white man. I had been told this so often in my life as though what I was was not enough, and that marrying white would improve me.

It was at my *Alma Mata* that I felt a really strong and complete sense of belonging for the first time. I was confident in my rebelliousness because being rebellious was not frowned upon. I had not really fit in with the majority at high school, the community I lived in or amongst my cousins when it came to participating in the student riots and boycotts. I was adamant that while involved in politics, I should still succeed in my studies. At university I received further recognition as an anti-Apartheid activist because the institution was for Black students only and most of us had come from schools affected by student uprisings. This made me proud. I was tenacious and studious. I wrote and published for the university poetry magazine. Most of my poetry was politically motivated about poverty and abuse.

The Poverty Paraffin Stove
Sleep gently on the floor, I will close to the door.
Don't choke on the smoke
From the paraffin stove.
I am sorry Mammy I was just a Baby
Whose lungs could no longer strive to keep me alive
Because the paraffin stove.
But you are supposed to have breath, not succumb to death.
The body cools and poverty still rules
Through the paraffin stove.
The fight to survive is lost
By those who we promise the most
By the paraffin stove… Jean Lee '87

Old man Uncle
He came to me at night
Why did I put up no fight?
He woke me from an untroubled sleep
So often I would no longer weep.
I awoke an un-nightmarish dream
But he put his hand up to quieten the scream
That wanted to erupt from my 7 – 11 year old body.
I am a convenience store
And this is year number 4.
You're a dirty old man uncle. Jean Lee '87

The parts of the stories that participants tell about their early university days are telling of the cultures in the different institutions. Four of us had attended HBUs while two had attended HWUs. This fits within the reality of Apartheid South Africa where Black (including Indian and "coloured") were only allowed to register at white universities if they had received a "pass" or permission from the Minister of Education. This was allowed only if the HBU did not offer a course similar to what the HWU had on offer.

My own hard work, irrespective of the motivation, allowed me to be a learner considered to be just-above-average. When I realised very late in school that I would not be able to gain access to university with the subjects I had, I switched subjects in my final year at school. I had little resources: I lived far from the new school so I had to travel for hours to and from; I was not allowed to study until late at night as electricity was expensive for my mother who had to pay school fees and travel costs. Unlike Sindy, who admits that while she had all the resources she did only the bare minimum in order to pass school, to please her parents:

I was…an average student. Why? Because things came very easy for me and I just never um, bothered with more than… (Sindy)

This resulted in Sindy not being able to attend university until she could apply for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) when she was older. She still, however, managed to achieve her degrees which were needed for a position in higher education.

The data analysis had to be either a mix of or built on other social theories (Wenger-Trayner, 2013). I realized early on that including the narratives of my participants was going to add to the challenge but I was convinced that it would add to the scope and richness of the study (Ellis, 2004; Chang, Ngunjiri & Hernandez, 2013). However, two concerns remained: literature on the type of autoethnographic study I was embarking on is scant. As the primary author using participants' input seemed to go against what I am arguing for – that Black

women depict their own stories. Autoethnography allows the author a dual role as researcher and researched which accommodates that use of a discourse which may not be familiar to many academics (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Chang, 2013; Ngunjiri, Hernandez & Chang, 2010).

Higher education institutional contexts are supposedly designed for academic success. However, these designs need to be reconsidered, realigned and reframed. Generalised racial and gendered notions of individuals maintain the historical constructs of identity prejudices and the value of certain perceptions for institutions. Acknowledging that new role players or anomalies exist in a context means that it becomes necessary to investigate whether the current paradigm sufficiently caters to their needs for progress. A process of paradigmatic change may illuminate our perceptions of ourselves and others within this space. This understanding adds lenses through which to look into the implications of adapting or adopting new theoretical frameworks or not. This takes more than a one-sided effort, it requires buy-in from all parties which often proves challenging and time-consuming. The pervading discourse around changing expectations in higher education is that it means a lowering of standards. So, if the intersectional critical race lens and all its considerations are to be adopted, the implications of defending it have to be addressed.

Ultimately, I hope that this thesis will mean that the rest of society may witness the experiences of a large but largely ignored sector of society. How we are challenged and what changes it will take to start to improve experiences in one domain. Most specifically, I want to address how we as Black women and other academics understand our lived experiences in order to bring about change in our domains. Changing knowledge is changing institution and society (Barnett, 2000) by a slow process of cultural address and societal responsibility towards the individual.

We do not necessarily know how or whether events of our past influence our current actions or in which areas of our lives. I feel we should be encouraged to bring our memories to the fore to better understand ourselves and others so that we may change knowledge, culture and structures (Dill & Zambrana, 2009). Those memories that we do readily recall and imagine as being influential should be acknowledged and examined. It also serves as a reminder that as adults we influence the experiences and perceptions of children and that often seemingly similar lives have indeed deeper differences in the intersections of factors.

My experiences as a Black woman in academia differ not only from white men, white women and Black men, but also from other Black women. I started out this research in a positivist paradigm as I was socialised with psychology statistics and mostly looking at group behaviour. Once I started examining my own socially constructed reality, I started to recognise that each person, even though we seem to hold homogeneity as a group, differed in perceptions. However, I thought that in the broader sphere, we grew up in the same era, therefore we must have had similar challenges and personality types to end up in academia. When I was asked to defend my stance, in the research proposal, that this study centres on *Black* women in higher education and not *all* women in higher education, I said that starting out with a seemingly homogenous group necessarily narrows the research to a particularly marginalised group. I had specific criterion in approaching participants while I knew, just as academics know, that it cannot be said *all academics...*, I indicate that through empirical evidence I have learnt that it cannot be said *all Black academics.*

The determinant numbers, statistics, categorisation and broader assumptions necessarily made by quantitative researchers, open spaces for investigations on an empirical level. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) speak of philosophical diversity amongst qualitative researchers. Maxwell (2012) affirms that while diversity within a culture is usually thought of as subcultures, members of these subcultures are not homogenous. This is an indication that empirical data in qualitative research is a necessary element of research once quantitative data shows up one or other anomaly, for example, Black women academics as outliers. It is the qualitative researchers' job not to be oppositional to quantitative researchers, but to "build up a detailed picture of the life stories and experiences" (Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2006:379). Qualitative researchers have the onus of adding the complementary relational angle to the research. I keep in mind that I am both researcher and researched and that participants in my study and I are subjective yet influenced by the topic or questions proposed by the researcher.

Being the most subjugated in society, the subjectivity of Black women is erased, skimmed over or omitted by patriarchal writers of history. There is not scope in this research to concentrate on all the ways in which we have been defined as different to the dominant representatives in academia. However, this is a place to start on our reflexivity and changing thinking around who belongs and who does not because we are different. While subjective, perceptions of belonging or not belonging in the spaces we inhabit remain important issues

for institutions in grappling with transformation and where inequalities and inequities of the past still play out in highly evident ways.

These are the narratives that others need to read. I needed also to test my own pre-conceived notions of what it means to be a Black woman with a particular desire to improve her circumstances and happened to choose or chance upon the educational trajectory. However, the more I spoke casually with other Black women about my autobiography the more I realised that there were significant socio-historical differences between my own story and those of many Black women. While we all experienced the obvious struggles under Apartheid, some of us seemed more and others less aware of the subtle and indirect discrimination post-Apartheid. None of the women I spoke with seemed to tell the tale I had imagined. I needed to test not only my memory of experiences but also my perceptions of those experiences. I wanted to test the method by which I had accessed my memories to see whether other Black women would still recall different things using similar cues.

As young Black children we seldom questioned the universal practice of "history" being told by the dominant culture in the dominant discourse. Some of us became more politically aware and responsive than others to the alternate stories of struggle stalwarts like Bantu Steve Biko, Nelson Holihlahla Mandela and Walter Sisulu – all male (Fanon, 1986; Khan, 1990; Iskander & Rustom, 2010; Soudien, 2017). It was much later that many of us came to recognise the stories of the women who fought equally, if not harder, while also raising communities of children. Recognition given by naming university buildings, streets and other public sites often came rather late – Winnie Mandela, Fatima Meer, Cissie Gool and Albertina Sisulu (Whitman, 2007; Eynon, 2017; Langa, 2017). I gradually became aware of the power of indoctrination and how the powerless accepted and retold dominant versions as the "truth". I realise that people seldom tell a story that include perspectives different from the white, male norm The stories of Black women often came closest to completing the whole, closing the gaps and carrying forward the legacies of the hidden histories.

Intersectional feminist theory demands a focus on social justice and thus my main feat must not be my own message (Crenshaw, 1989; McNamee & Gergen, 1999; Gergen, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). This would defeat the purpose of my work and I would be misrecognising the diversity of effects of a commentary of a collective history on the individual as well as on my audience. The women interviewed for my study are not necessarily feminists, anti-racist or share the same critique of the past. A number of the

participants had not heard of intersectionality or intersectional feminist theory. I have the values which decided this project as the participants have values, similar or differently informed, in accepting the invitation to be participants in this study (Mabokela, 2003; Yuval-Davis, 2006; Starr, 2010).

I am interested in who we are as social beings and what we feel we may need to improve especially academic contexts for ourselves and others. It has always been that. I do not expect my participants to have the same intention in sharing their stories, but I would like my audiences to consider that the manner of our interactions affect and are affected by our very social interactions, whether past, present or future contexts (Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2008). The participants may not have interpreted my questions as I initially intended, but this is both the difficulty and the distinctiveness of constructionist approach and narrative analysis. Words take on the meaning and offer back to the researcher what the participant understands (Riessman, 2001). It is the complexity which is the nature of social sciences, especially in the shift from ethnographic, clustered histories.

In asking my participants to do two things (draw and talk to the drawing) I was giving them all the room to digress without them feeling uncertain about the relevance of their story to my pre-planned questions. This made the stories not easily "code-able" but gave a sense that I was not attempting to "fragment their lived experiences into thematic", neatly coded texts (Riessman, 2001:2). Although the stories are not told in chronological order, I rework these in order to track a trajectory so that I may identify individual and collective themes through plotting of events which occurred and influenced the lives of the participants. Identifying where the individual places herself in her descriptions may give a hint as to her sense of identity and agency and the intersections impacting on her trajectory. The narratives of the participants are compared in order to look for common and outlying themes between myself and the participants. Still, it should be remembered that these are individual perceptions of the interactions between ourselves and others in the institution. Also, the writing remains tainted by my style and diction and then the readers' interpretations, leaving room for further complexities. The end of narrative research is not the end – it is always on the provision that it is understood to be "interpretive" in perspective and analysis (Gergen & Gergen, 2012; Gergen, 2001).

The interest of "socially oriented narrative research" thus lies in the individual commentary on the phenomena of ourselves as Black women in academic contexts. Through the analysis

my aim is to display the voices of Black women, whatever boundaries between the culture and practices within the context and the individual and the narratives as "social events". These narratives can be cathartic and expressive for the narrator but are structured to be employed as a tool of understanding, critique or be critiqued by various audiences (Andrews *et al.,* 2008).

Critical reflection about our interactions on various levels is a vital part of teaching and learning, especially where practitioners aim to interrogate their agency (Herman, 2015; Kahn *et al.,* 2012). Academics with whom I work in professional learning have teaching and learning research as their second profession – their field of research or profession being their first (Van Schalkwyk, 2010; Leibowitz, Wisker & Lamberti, 2015). As "second generation" (Hayes, 2015:2) doctoral professionals, i.e., following a second career programme, these academics may find autoethnographic or reflexive writing to play a significant part in building their portfolio to "move beyond theory" in their "professional learning" (Leibowitz *et al.*, 2016; Winberg & Pallitt, 2016). Reflection can encourage academics to interrogate their own interactions and the impact on how higher education evolves.

Access to HWU is by no means acceptance in HE. When a Black woman colleague suggested placing the topic of racism on the agenda of an in-house conference at a HWU, the hour-long meeting was dominated by counter-arguments from the otherwise white attendees as to why this is not suitable. The suggestion was then "democratically" (majority rule) denied with the main reason that it would cause discomfort to the mostly white academic participants. It was argued that if anyone wanted to open a discussion on racism it could be included under the banner of "transformation of the curriculum".

We are in need of "collaborative spaces to engage"(Leibowitz, Bozalek, Garraway, Herman, Jawitz, Muhuro, Ndebele, Quinn, van Schalkwyk, Vorster, & Winberg, no date; Carolissen, 2016; Carolissen & Bozalek, 2017).

The focus is the interplay between the structure and the culture, and the individual. Those of us who entered from the margins, ignored the rules of society in South Africa and made alternative choices. My aim had always been independence – financial and emotional. I did not dream of marriage but instead of the freedom I thought education would bring. Development of identity can be framed between accepting the past and merging the past

with the future (Yuval-Davis, 2010). This chapter situates the study in the literature of the educational struggle of Black women academics. It offers the rationale for a contextual review of the literature (Clarence, 2015).

The term "ladies first" takes on a different meaning when there is a possibility of a takeover of power by Black women. We are not allowed that courtesy. The matter of equity education and academic positions has become a social justice issue where Black women have to be moving to the forefront (Shackleton, Riordan & Simonis, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2006; Letseka & Maile, 2008) without having to pay the extra price of proving themselves when it is not necessary for men to do the same. Reading stories of people who struggled through life's challenges helped me in determining my future choices and critically examining my context. Studies which have included women are often without recognising the intersectionality of issues affecting Black women (Walker, 1998). Racial and gender inequality in education, even in 2020, translates to white, sometimes men and sometimes women, being in charge. These are more of the social constructs which mean that a Black woman academic does "not belong" unless as a member of the subservient. We are viewed as out of place and need to constantly and repeatedly prove in academic circles that dues have been paid (Puwar, 2004; Fordham, 1993). They are the workhorses or "donkeys" who bear the constant burden of the heaviest and often menial workload in order to prove that they are worthy of academic positions (Mabokela, 2003).

Literacy is the way of disentangling ourselves from permanently living lives of desperation (Ladson-Billings, 1992; Prinsloo & Breir, 1996). Literacy is positively linked to academic success and future prospects (Education Policy Outlook, 2013). While these stories gave me hope of unravelling myself from the web of working-class poverty, the entry to the "dream" is not ideal. Stories like J M Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*, Mariama Ba's *So Long A Letter* gave me insight into how others in society view Black men and Black women.

This study concerned the context of higher education in South Africa and concentrated on the intersection of constraints experienced by Black women. Most frameworks are not able to address the depth of these experiences. In higher education white western men were customarily the bearers of knowledge, and colonised countries like South Africa focus appreciation of academic knowledge on the "global north" (Clegg, 2016). The map of the life I was expected to live had been conceived in 1915; years before I was born and put into

effect as the Population Registration Act of 1948, Mixed Marriages and Immorality Act of 1949, Group Areas Act of 1950 and other Apartheid pass laws of 1952.

Drawing on authors such as Yuval-Davis (2011) and Gray White (2008), who argue that where the two characteristics, being Black and woman, intersect, some challenges are multiplied and indeed, made more complex to understand. In the South African higher education context, issues stemming from Apartheid (Soudien, 2010, 2013, 2017; Bozalek & Boughey, 2012), race, gender and intersectionality have been addressed by authors such as de la Rey (1999), Mabokela (2000, 2003) and Mabokela and Green (2001). However, race and gender issues cannot be considered as static definitions. The concerning factors change over time and understanding, adding previously unrecognised dimensions to the concerns. An example is the need to redefine equity and equality and separating out numbers of white women from Black women in institutional statistics. Similarly, demographics on Black staff have to be separated into Black men and Black women.

For narrative and CRT, I use the bell hooks (hooks, 1994) typology as a framework. She suggests that the complexities of Black women's experiences are by no means uniform. So, although she writes from a US perspective of Black women's struggles, her theoretical perspective recognises that the historical denial of Black women across the sector of patriarchy and social injustice is inclusive of all Black women from first-world contexts to third-world conditions and everywhere in between. Her theory opens up the notion to be inclusive of wherever women find themselves fighting against decolonisation and any forms of dominance and "exclusionary practices", including by other feminist movements (1994:9). She further recognises that Black men and white women "have it both ways" "as oppressor" or "oppressed", offering them enablers and vested interests not available to Black women (1994:15). Ethnographic studies of institutional culture relating to racial and gendered identity (Gray White, 2008), while relevant, does not always account for the significance of each individual's in-depth experiences. Black women can decide the dominant themes of their experiences, interactions and perceptions regarding race, gender, class and sexual identity within the intersectional feminist theory recognised by hooks (1984), Crenshaw (1989) and Collins (2000). It is often exactly the stereotypical beliefs, devoid of individual personal voice, which further impact on the Black woman's varying societal and institutional experiences.

Black women academics come from sectors of society with their own identity, cultural and educational background. The expected trajectory of the Black girl in South Africa was one of three choices, i.e., have children and/or marry, factory worker or maid, and if going on to be educated she would be a nurse, teacher or possibly do administrative work. This is not much different the world over, as hooks (1994) describes expectations of Black girls in the United States as having limited, in service of others, career choices. The history of education and social structures in South Africa places and maintains positions for Black women at lower status than anyone else. Access to higher education for Black women does not mean acceptance and appreciation of their knowledge (Liccardo *et al.,* 2015).

5.11 Chapter summary

This chapter gave a limited exploration of the themes which were elicited from the data collection through autobiographical writing by the researcher. In exploring the literature of previous studies as well as the participant interviews, I realised that it by no means addressed all of the important intersectional issues which were discussed but I tried to highlight the most salient. The flowing chapter is a deeper discussion of some of these in the hope that it may be a starting point to rectifying what is wrong in how we go about addressing the under-representation of Black women in higher academic positions and studies in South Africa.

Chapter Six

Further Discussion

6.1 Introduction

A few of the participants I interviewed for this research mentioned that they had never taken the opportunity to think deeply about the pain caused by past events or reactions to current circumstances. All of us, as Black women, had experienced more hardship than recognised, even by ourselves. Day to day we navigate more so than other women with fear of being raped in parks and townships. We live with being most discriminated against for just being or saying something considered as politically offensive in a meeting. For many of us, life is one negative event to the next and we do not connect our reactions, verbal or silent, as stemming from any particular experience in our past. Without investigating events and reasons, many things remain as they always were, and our actions and reactions are accepted as unchanging characteristics of ourselves. Berry (2016) explains how the torment of our youth can remain with us for the longest time. Strength, grown out of pain, could be utilised to challenge the status quo (Boylorn, 2014). The participants' experiences added dimensions to my reflections of the culture of my and our collective past and present (Chang, 2016). An added challenge was to make my deeply ontological reflections fit in with the epistemological understanding, because I was still adamant that I wanted to tell a story about Black women in academia. This made it difficult to be objective. At the same time, I felt compelled to remove or temper in my telling the terrific and terrible aspects and focus on what else could be academically relevant about this study. The examination became in part about what could benefit (Ellis, 2004) academics and institutions in understanding and improving experiences of Black women in academia. The critical experiences are of Black women and how these interact to make up her perceptions (Boylorn, 2014). It also serves to help others in the institution understand their role in this interplay (Ellis, 2009).

This thesis explored a topic relevant to debates about transformation in South African higher education, with specific reference to Black women academics' experiences in universities. In 2013 I was one of two people of colour in a group of eighteen researchers from various South African institutions. A quick quantitative search of the national and international data assured me that the phenomenon thought I had imagined was worth the research attention

(Creswell, 2009). White women dominate the field of academic development while their white male counterparts dominate academic research. I have noticed that while I was often invited to be part of work groups, these were often led by projects funded to white women. Black women leaders and PhD candidates in South African universities are still anomalies. Many of the challenges are highlighted in the previous chapter and this chapter offers a deeper analysis of some of the issues highlighted therein.

The data analysis considers the personal (sense of identity), positionality (sense of belonging) and interpersonal relationships (interplay) of Black women. Narratives of ourselves give details of our sense of growth over time. In relaying our narratives, we give away our perceptions of the value of societal relationships with peers and authority. Being prejudiced and disadvantaged in a patriarchal society is not unique to a country such as South Africa. These are the reasons that the anti-racist and feminist movements are critiqued as homogenising marginalised people (Lugones, 2010; Pratt-Clarke, 2010). Thus, for the South African context, I offer a caveat that often the applications of critical theories developed in first world countries. The "multiple jeopardy" frame (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Salem, 2016) does not refute that Black women elsewhere, such as in South Africa, have different realities to where the frame was developed. This awareness of different but not discordant realities, however, can only be fully realised when we make ourselves the subject through our narratives.

Black women in higher education cannot escape the prejudices and these relate closely and directly my own experiences in the higher education context. On the other hand, they also relate closely to those who are not Black women. In 2015 the Nobel laureate, Tim Hunt's infamous speech about women in science cannot be excused as just one white man's opinion. In immediate context, also in 2015, a Stellenbosch University professor tweeted to a Black student involved in the *#FeesMustFall* campaign, to leave the white campus. In 2019, white scientists at Stellenbosch University published an article explaining why women of colour have lower intelligence than other races. While many in society wish to have these examples of racism and sexism to be evidence of individual faults, claiming *#NotAllMen* and *#NotAllWhites*, they do also reflect the systemic violence that is inherent in HEIs. Should those involved in these incidents, perpetrators and targets, write of being directly linked to these events, what they think led to their perceptions and reactions, it will help in addressing harmful and irrational expressions and prejudices. "[S]ocial justice,

transformation and decolonisation are seen as being in tension with academic excellence" (Behari-Leak & Mckenna, 2017:3).

> *The[se] critics do not recognize the influences of indigenous, feminist, race, queer, and ethnic border studies. We need to protect ourselves from these criticisms. We also need to create spaces for dialogue and public scholarly engagement of these issues. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005:1083)*

There is no doubt that all HEIs in South Africa have, to various extents, acknowledged the need to work towards decolonisation and transformation. However, the evidence presented in this thesis shows that there have not been significant or reasonable shifts. The mobility of Black women has not shifted significantly upward over the past 30 years (Amuwo, 2004; Herman, 2011; Akala & Divala, 2016). In my own institution, for the first time, two Black women did not feel that they could "adapt" to or accept the discomfort of working amongst so many white colleagues. They presented their reasons, which I may not be at liberty to discuss as they were not part of my study. I mention the experiences only as I witnessed them. I also witnessed the criticism against the Black colleagues. The thesis had set out to examine, on individual levels, the reasons why the challenges persist. The quotation above, by two South Africa scholars, shows that equity and inclusion have not impacted institutional attitudes and perceptions toward Black women academics as the most marginalised in HE domains. The inequality, inequity and shifting ideas around what constitutes academic rigour, excellence or even "good enough" methods (Hughes, 2008b) of research, are not sufficiently and critically addressed in HEIs. The attempts to restructure the institutional hierarchy has failed Black women. Transformation is slow because it is allowed to happen at a pace decided by the gatekeepers and benefactors of the dominant culture.

The realisation is that not only have Black women been excluded from HEIs for over a century in South Africa, but there is little intent in addressing the issues in an honest manner. HEIs need to shift their focus to the more contextual awareness which are also often the less published issues. This inclusion will possibly better influence perceptions and sense of belonging. Sense of belonging will mean removing the sense of entitlement enjoyed by some. It will mean that everyone can know that the place belongs equally. For this to happen, priority must be given to issues pertaining to Black women. For too long the credits had been piled respectively upon white men and women. Black men, by nature of a patriarchal

society, enjoy more benefits than Black women. For Black women, especially, there is the constant feeling of not contributing to the knowledge which holds value.

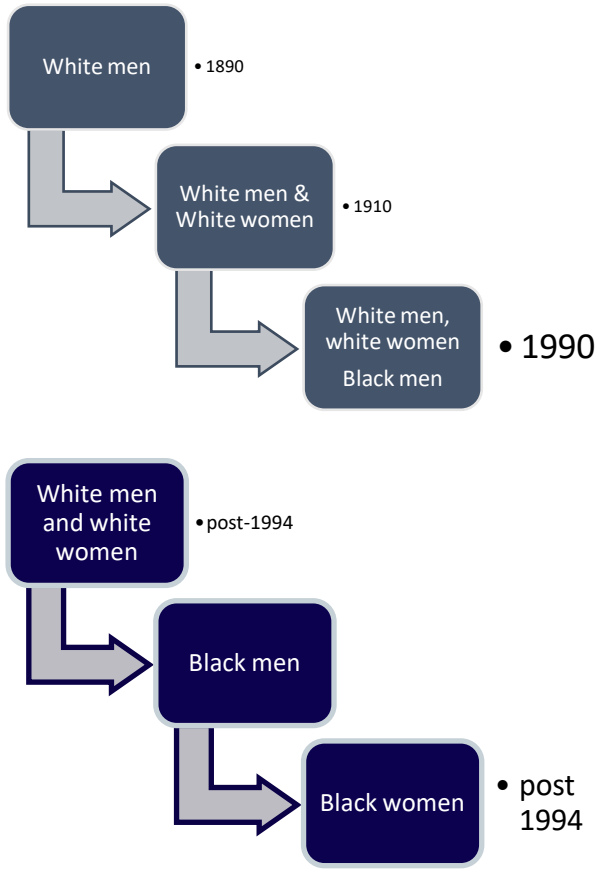


Figure 6.1.1: Population groups access and influence in higher education

The figure above shows that white men still dominate in HEIs in South Africa. Pre 1990, Black women did not feature in accessing, much less influencing research and culture in institutions. Post 1994, Black women have access but still their influence is minimal.

6.1.1 Self-care and care for others

Certain research practitioners would argue that autoethnography is too close to the concerns of the researcher and thus lacks sufficient rigour, the nature of which makes it inadmissible as investigative research. Qualitative research in the form of autoethnography is self-narration which pushes towards the examination of our learned responses, unique and shared interactions and makes us active participants in social analysis (Ellis, 2004; Lather, 2013; Hughes *et al.*, 2015). This can make it highly critical of self and the influences of society on human nature.

By drawing in knowledges, meanings and interpretations of our fellow global or local citizens, researchers are exposed to more than a dominant understanding of reality. Considering that our reflections are about ourselves and what we experience (Archer, 2007), autoethnography, as means of reflection, is always context-specific and political. Rejecting the "distanced" researcher, autoethnographers claim positionality with "personal stories", "curiosities, interests and intentions" from within the investigated culture (Keane *et al.*, 2016:168). Thinking critically and reflectively stems from the desire to bring about individual and social change. Only once we are dedicated to improving ourselves, broader contextual cultures and their influence can be considered. However, it should also lead to change of self. True self-emancipation cannot be realised without some onus being placed on the individual. Autoethnography is a means of self-care as it allows us to explore ways in which we both sabotage and heal ourselves. The important part of healing through autobiography is the cathartic experience of expression: "what happened to me". Theorising and researching the narrative allows us to explore the reasons that we feel isolated in these spaces (Mirza, 2009; Roxå, 2015). Academia seems to be a game of individual competences with consuming workloads and little time to give and receive care (Herman, 2015). Race, class and gender issues affect our everyday interactions as enablers and constraints (Tierney, 1998; Nathan and Scobell, 2012b; Winkle-Wagner, 2015). For marginalised groups, the academic space is even harder to navigate because of self-isolation and because we are distanced from the "normative individual in academia", the "white, middle-class, rational, unencumbered and male" (Bozalek, 2017:43). For Black women, these are mostly constraining factors which we wade through, without complaining, as a part of life.

We are not only hindered by others but also by ourselves in how we choose to, or habitually, interplay. Academic survival is dependent upon the realisation that there are often interlinked reasons for why feelings of isolation occur (Carter, Blumenstein & Cook, 2012; Maodzwa-Taruvinga & Divala, 2014; Davis & Maldonado, 2015) These kinds of qualitative data become invaluable in making what is unknown known or acknowledging what is unacknowledged. Autoethnography allows us to use social research not only for social and transformative justice, but also as a means to transform ourselves for our own benefit.

6.1.2 Self-investigation towards crossing boundaries

I did not fully realise the impacts and consequences my decisions made on my trajectory until relaying my narrative. This helped me imagine the alternatives of "what could have

been", as it forced a critical investigation of myself, my context and the people who surrounded me. While my autobiography was written to portray my trajectory, accepting a position at an academic institution forced me to reflect on who else, similar to me, was present and in what positions. Hughes (2008) says that our naiveté affect others and for this reason autoethnographic writing is "good enough" as a research method.

Autoethnography can help us to avoid navel-gazing and "reproducing ignorance, and the denial of the dynamics of expansion and constraint; privilege and penalty" (Hughes, 2008b:141) Autoethnographic research which includes the narratives of others in our society opens a screen for comparing our experiences with those of others.

A number of boundaries can be crossed in these narratives: personal, physical, academic amongst others. Stetsenko (2008) suggests that we can take up an "activist transformative stance" just by collaborating with other people in the world. These interactions broaden our repertoire of understanding other people's experiences and cultures. Self-investigation is necessary when our aim is societal transformation and equality. It is important that we know where we stand with privileges and affordances and where we lack understanding of other positionalities, as explained by Chang (2007), below. It becomes more than a story but a collective commentary on our lived experiences in a society which will otherwise continue to nullify the marginalised and our experiences.

> *[A]utoethnography emphasizes cultural analysis and interpretation of the researcher's behaviors, thoughts, and experiences in relation to others in society. Autoethnography should be ethnographical in its methodological orientation, cultural in its interpretive orientation, and autobiographical in its content orientation.* (Chang, 2007:1)

While a doctoral thesis is an individual task, this thesis offers as example how course can be undertaken to include other narratives towards transforming self, culture and society. This view not only expands my own research but may open avenues to readers, towards collaborative research in academia and collaborative change within our institutions. Although not quite co-constructed autoethnography, stemming from CRT, this research possibly represents critical "opportunities for solidarity among [a] marginalised [group] as well as across difference, inspiring those in spaces of privilege to be allies in social justice work" (Cann & Demeulenaere, 2013:147). We are not entirely without responsibility towards the changes we wish to see. To deny our responsibility would be to deny any agentic power (Cooper, 2015; Leibowitz *et al.*, 2015). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) describe critical

researchers as those who use their own experiences to investigate historical, social and other injustices. Through interpretation, connections are made between past and present, self and others to indicate where change towards equity is needed. Self-interrogation of the positionality of the individual within the socio-cultural is often framed as self-serving, over-subjective and not sufficiently critical (Foley, 2010:477-479). My view is that the aim of critique is towards changing society while understanding the self in that society clarifies what is being critiqued, and why. The culture and structure within which we reside is unequal and certain aspects of inequalities bother some of us more than others. That which directly affects me, however, cannot be the only reason for conducting research. The topic being known to the participants makes it political on their part as well. On a smaller scale, such research can be compared to the "role of the collective" to "provide critical support for the development of personal political agency" as during the mass action against the Apartheid state (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005:571).

6.1.3 Self-critique as validation

Drawing on participants' narratives portrays similarities and differences in our experiences and perceptions of a domain. It allowed me to critique my perceptions of events. My position is that narratives should be continuously interrogated as a representative voice of experiences of violations as well as validation. There is no single framework for investigating ourselves and our institutions and where we succeed or fail. Critiquing ourselves, our society and our position within it should be the starting point.

By default, self-narrative enquiry as methodology reveals ourselves to ourselves as we open our stories to others (Reed-Danahay, 1997). The purpose is to build or "scaffold" understanding, yet is a vulnerable-making effort by opening uncomfortable dialogues (Tierney, 1998) because in revealing our own history we also reveal the role others have played. For me, it is the ultimate qualitative study but, for all the pain it may cause, it needs to do more. Personal, emotional, yet limiting, because whole truths cannot be told without exposing relationships between ourselves and others sharing our cultural space (Starr, 2010). In my narrative, I merely express my idea of others and they may not agree with, or readily acknowledge, the role I may have constructed for them.

From the outset of this study I was concerned that the history of Black people was written for us. We were not asked whether we agreed with how it/we were depicted. Yet I found myself writing an interpretation of someone else's narrative; precisely what I found

troubling in literature. The closest I could come to testing the validity was to check with the participants that the data reflect their story despite it being rearranged and reworded. Merriam (2009) refers to the validity as a credible representation; true to the intention of the narrator; a promise that it is trustworthy in what it reflects. Validity is concerned with the reliability of the data as it is presented, as well as once it is interpreted. My subjective understanding is impacted by my own reality, while each of the participants have their own reality they imagined they were presenting to me. Constructivist theory sees reality not as an external entity but as perceptions influenced by our past experiences.

Autoethnography acknowledges that other voices as an important. Building a theory around the influences of society on the self automatically assumes a study of those around us. I was mindful of "power differentials" between myself and those being researched (Chang, 2013:45). Silverman (2010) sees a constructivist approach not as one that problematises "several voices" but alternatively, acknowledges these as findings. The goal of this research is to find "how" individuals interplay within their contexts; and "how" the interplay is voiced in relation to their contexts is supported by this theoretical approach.

The examples under each of the themes in the analysis are justifiable as each ensured that, although the voices were limited, a critical investigation of the data was done. Silverman (2010) warns against choosing examples which serve the hypothesis of the researcher. My expectations or hypothesis of Black women were not met in the interviews. I had to come to terms with this. I had thought that most participants would have narratives framed within the same motivations as my own. My quest for education drove me, and I expected that they had followed due to similar motivation. I had to overcome what Silverman describes as the "anecdotal approach" which serves ideas the researcher formulated from her own experience. Tracing the trajectory as well as exploring the influences on their education, I found instances in the data which negated rather than supported my initial notion. My bias was tested during the first individual interview where I realised that the participant had different views on politics, race and gender to my own. Most of the participants also had a privileged upbringing compared to my own. Although researchers cannot guarantee complete validity, I hope that in the end, the intention with which I set out to value the data, is reflected in my "methodological awareness" and attempt at unbiased analysis (Silverman 2010).

> *Perhaps most importantly, we must recognize that ethics requires us to risk ourselves precisely at moments of*

> *unknowingness, when what forms us diverges from what lies before us, when our willing-ness to become undone in relation to others constitutes our chance of becoming human. To be undone by another is a primary necessity, an anguish, to be sure, but also a chance—to be addressed, claimed, bound to what is not me, but also to be moved, to be prompted to act, to address myself elsewhere, and so to vacate the self-sufficient "I" as a kind of possession. If we speak and try to give an account from this place, we will not be irresponsible, or, if we are, we will surely be forgiven – Judith Butler, 2005:136.*

The objective of this thesis is to draw out how we perceive and experience these factors as influencing our learning and teaching. The interactions, our sense of agency and how a sense of belonging affected our interplay once we were young adults. Terre Blanche *et al.* (2006) demonstrate two characteristics in analysing the objectives of a study:

1) the units of analysis that are the focus of investigation (in this case the participants);
2) the variables, which are features if these objects that are to be observed or measured, that is the institutional culture.

Through investigating and analysing my own narrative, I developed a suitable way to gain access to the participants' being the teller of their own stories.

The application of social theory is always, in part, critique of society and, in part, critique of the self (individual) acting within that society. Reflection plays a significant role in finding meaning in self and society. It is almost a method of self-counsel (Mahmood, 2001; Henkeman, 2016b).

Meaning-making evolves throughout our living experiences, we add to and adapt understanding as we access more knowledge sources (Sugiman *et al.,* 2008; Villar & Albertín, 2010) much like every child progressing from drawing stick figures in childhood to different ways of representing figures depending on their talent, experiences, interests and time to practice. Autoethnography is a qualitative research methodology which critiques both the culture as well as the individual roles played and where the data is sourced from individuals within the culture being investigated (Crenshaw, 1989; Tolich, 2010).

A critical social research project would be incomplete without an investigation of how we live in accord or discord within our cultures and contexts. The intention is to show that, although we all are influenced by external factors, we are differently impacted, make individual choices and do not react in automatic ways to the external world (Gergen &

Gergen, 1983). Identities, like culture, are non-static and encounters change our perceptions but in different ways than they may other individuals (Adams, 2006). We feel either included or excluded in sectors of society, depending on our "sense of" identity (Sindic, 2011; Biggs *et al.,* 2015). The methodology uses historical data both recorded and unrecorded and the researcher decided that both are relevant to be integrated to fill a hole in the literary whole (Sue *et al.,* 2009; Hughes *et al.,* 2015). This methodology may serve to fill as well as open further gaps in research on the topic (Vodde & Gallant, 2013; Hancock, 2016; Kang'ethe & Chivanga, 2016).

6.1.3.1 Limitation: Critique of autoethnography

> *Autoethnography confronts dominant forms of representation and power in an attempt to reclaim, through self-reflective response, representational spaces that have marginalized those of us at the borders. (Tierney, 1998:66)*

Experiences may seem to be unrelated to our academic (or any other) success or failure but they are not. Relating these experiences is often critiqued as non-academic as it uses "informal language" and "feminist notions of science" (Foley, 2010). Foley (2010) argues that autoethnography makes academic writing more "accessible" to the public. However, other academic purists insist that too much is new and thus uncertain about autoethnography that all of the ethical and methodological issues hamper the required academic stringency (Tolich, 2010). We also do not have the answers to which areas of our lives our experiences do extend. Sparkes (2000:21) describes autoethnography as "highly personalized accounts that draw upon the experiences of the author/researcher for the purposes of extending sociological understanding".

In *The only honest thing: autoethnography, reflexivity and small crises in fieldwork*, Delamont (2009) claims that when scholars research themselves, they choose projects which hold personal importance. She states that autoethnography is concerned with what matters to the autoethnographer. Reading this aggrieved me because I felt guilty that I had wanted to believe that what I was researching was for the greater good. My promoters who assured me that because I was using only those parts of my narrative which affects many Black girls and women, I need not concern myself with that critique. Reading the same Delamont (2009:58) article later in my process, I came to understand that I was using both methods described in her article. I do believe that mine is not what can be described as "autoethnographic self-obsession". She distinguishes *autoethnography*, in the terms of Ellis

(1996), when writing about my own narrative of my trajectory, from *reflexive autobiographical writing*. The latter is when the researcher writes on her experiences of researching individuals other than herself.

Telling my story is a self-reflection which turned out to reveal areas through my lifetime where I had been dominated and where I retaliated. It started out as an introspection, an autobiography, which I was forced to put on hold when I changed careers. In my new role as advisor for the professional learning of lecturers and as part of a national research study, my study had to fit within a larger national study. As a research group, we used critical social theory. I decided, however, that I did not want to steer too far from my initial interest. I thus concentrated more toward CRT and intersectionality. Together with my supervisors we realised that other stories could be incorporated with my own and be told in a way that formed a reflective story-telling. I merged telling my story, that of a Black woman in academia, with the professional development of other Black women. I wanted the stories told here to be in part as honest a reflection for the participants as it had been for me when I first started writing my story. I wanted to capture the experiences of events in a particular time in our country's history to be relayed from other marginalised individuals' perspectives so that I could compare one set of experiences against another.

6.1.3.2 Decoloniality. Decolonisation. Transformation.

Black women in South Africa are not a minority group but a marginalised group which is literally and figuratively placed in the outskirts of society. Living in rural or outlying areas of cities and working as labourers in kitchens, factories, or farms. Continued negative social attitudes about Black women's academic abilities is directly related to low inclusion rates. Issues affecting Black women academics in South African HEIs are exacerbated due to two factors:

i) the lasting attitudes post-Apartheid (Badat, 2010; Cobb-Roberts & Agosto, 2011; Sue, 2015). Soudien (2010) emphasises that "the project of 'whiteness' remains invisible to itself. So that even in post-Apartheid South Africa, education remains a Black aspiration and a white reality".

ii) claims of "colour blindness" and "gender blindness" that renders the Black woman academic as unseen and unheard. Claiming blindness to colour has little effect on rectifying inequalities in HEIs (Arday & Mirza, 2018), resulting in Black women remaining marginalised (Mirza, 2008).

6.2 Enablers and constraints

There is no "single-axis framework" or neatly packed system of enablers that can represent Black women's possession of a space in academia. Such a frame "distorts [our] experiences" (Crenshaw, 1989). South Africa has a large part of its history still untold – Black history. Narratives of the marginalised are thus unacknowledged by broader society as having any value. Bamberg and Andrews (2004:54) agree that societal memory should allow the personal to be identified in the collective memory. However, our history books either have absences of Black history or portray Black people as the "other".

Identifying enablers and constraints in achieving goals in academia is something each Black woman should be left to identify for herself. The variables to consider and the intersections are often unique to the economic and societal context of the institutions and individual identity (Herman, 2015; Behari-Leak, 2017). While constraints such as finances, educational background and other people's perceptions are difficult to turn around, some individuals are able to convert these challenges to gear towards their goals (Mahmood, 2001; Mcmillan & Gordon, 2016). For students who struggle, having an academic teacher who understands and can recognise the student needs, can be an invaluable enabler. The discussions which follow under the headings are in some instances constraint or enabler and in other instances both constraint and enabler. The issue of class remains relevant when entering HE where moving between class structures elicits feeling of unease (Pease, 2010:63). Taking charge of one's trajectory under such circumstances remains challenging. Dealing with constraints and choosing enablers can be determined by positive or negative lessons in the past (Wenger & Snyder, 2000; Wenger-Trayner, 2013). Going against cultural expectations and structural barriers sometimes seems like deliberately choosing a pathway littered with traps. The agency required is different as there are fewer role-models to emulate and often less support by either cultural or structural forces. These challenges may be eased by being part of a collective, support group. The individual Black woman's life experiences would rarely have prepared her for putting herself in the unknown domain of a relevant citizen (Winkle-Wagner, 2015).

6.2.1 Family and society

Children will very often follow the example set by the significant adults in their social and educational contexts (Mngoma, 1997:101, 122). Parents who drink excessively are more likely to have children who do likewise. Fortunately, this is also the same for good habits

such as reading and getting up to diligently go to work. Good habits can mean the escape from poverty's trap (Johnson, 2000). In her study of rural South African families with school-going children, Mngoma (1997) finds that, often irrespective of socio-economic background, one of the most influential factors for children becoming habitual readers is the influence in the home. According to the Education Policy Outlook (2013), preschool exposure to literacy by parents and caregivers can determine a child's lifelong attitude towards learning. Many poorer children have no parental care during the day and with the high rate of illiteracy and semi-literacy in South Africa, the chances are slim that many children have this enabler.

Racial segregation and the violence exercised to maintain it was highly successful in South Africa (Brown, 2000). Due to the separation of residential areas, schooling, health care and socialisation, many privileges afforded to whites were denied to others. Often the atrocities could only be learnt of in retrospect, some being so well hidden that many are still not aware of how the racial divisions controlled education and health. We were mostly only aware of our own class divisions within our communities. Classism and colourism further divided communities which were already separated by race (Brown, 2000; Yuval-Davis, 2006; Carolissen & Bozalek, 2017).

Society placed sever restrictions on Black communities, suffered mostly by Black girls who were expected to respect everyone and received the least. Being seen, not heard and other manners were enforced to make her amenable:

> *Once upon a time there was a child who was wilful, and would not doeth as her mother wished. For this reason God had no pleasure in her, and let her become ill, and no doctor could do her any good, and in a short time she lay on her death-bed. When she had been lowered into her grave, and the earth was spread over her, all at once her arm came out again, and stretched upwards, and when they had put it in and spread fresh earth over it, it was all to no purpose, for the arm always came out again. Then the mother herself was obliged to go into the grave, and strike the arm with a rod, and when she had done that, it was drawn in, and then at last the child had rest beneath the ground.*

In sharing the story of *The Wilful Child,* Ahmed (2014:1-22) employs the little girl as analogy for those who oppose and fight against social constructs. The raised arm is a metonym for those Black girls whose sense of agency and chosen identity are stifled when they are young. The portrayal shows how parents play in to society's norms at the expense

of a child's individuality. Our mothers and other mothers in society, who are arguably closest to their daughters and their biggest supporters, can side with dominant powers. Their intentions may be well-meaning as they may feel that the need to fit in seems bigger than the will to stand out (Bamberg & Andrews, 2004; hooks, 2008; Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010). Little Black girls are held down for their own good lest they become loud and unacceptable to society. Being recognised as outspoken is not the ideal as a servant or sub-servient. No-one likes a loud-mouthed girl, much less when she is Black as well (Pratt-Clarke, 2010; Carolissen, Van Wyk & Pick-Cornelius, 2012:40).

Oppressed women, being the primary carers, pass on their manners of acceptance and compliance to the hierarchies to girl children (Mngoma, 1997; Mabokela *et al.*, 2004). The thinking is that compliance makes a difficult life a bit easier in a white and male dominated world (Sue, 2011; Akram, 2013). Little girls are "cloned" to be good wives or servants (Essed & Schwab, 2012). Many Black girls will learn "compliance" as a way of avoiding abuse, injury and for peace-keeping, much like other women they grow up around, says Carver and Chambers (2008) in *Judith Butler's Precarious Politics.* Alternate examples set by some mothers, women teachers, aunts and family friends acting as "othermothers" could however set the example for "resisting oppression" (hooks, 1994, 2008; Collins, 2000). Girls may unconsciously pick out or focus on role-models what they admire, and recall these aspects to imagine a different identity (hooks, 2000).

We live in a sexist and racist society which is not only highly judgemental of Black girls and women but which makes formal institutions from primary school level, exclusionary (Akala & Divala, 2016; Neal-Jackson, 2018). This exclusionary culture and its practices become more and more strict as she moves to enter higher levels in institutions (Badat, 2010; Divala, 2014; Winkle-Wagner, 2015; Behari-Leak, 2017). Socialisation of gender and race roles through religion and other practices start within our families and neighbourhoods (Mirza, 2009; Ahmed, 2014; Anderson *et al.*, 2016).

While these practices and expectations may often be negative, they can offer a sense of valuable belonging to a cultural history, and having a counter-narrative is also viewed with pride in certain families and communities (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Bamberg & Andrews, 2004). Extended family to care for children is an enabler found in many poorer communities (Lugones, 2014; Msimanga, 2014; Anderson *et al.*, 2016). This is not a denial of the destructive force poverty can play in the role of fathers' absence, often found amongst Black

families (Coovadia *et al.*, 2009; Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010; Lugones, 2014). The dominant discourses are marketed to children, through parents and community, but often the main source is government and religion (Chouinard & Cousins, 2007; Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010; Hasford, 2016). The behavioural patterns Black girls are forced to adhere to are often to make her accepted and agreeable to white society (West, 2006; Schroeder & Di'Angelo, 2010; Di'Angelo & Sensoy, 2012). Learning from the women in our lives is like creating a work of art – much like the quilt-makers' creations (Nathan and Scobell, 2012b). Our mothers and mother-figures could play significant roles, although they may often only be acknowledged as secondary influencers (Bamberg & Andrews, 2004; Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010). As the most disloyal loyal act, it is often mother and her sisters and her women elders who stifle the outspoken Black girl. The good intention is that she may fit "comfortably" into her place in society (Mahmood, 2001; hooks, 2013; Neal-Jackson, 2018). On the other hand, single, independent women in communities could teach girls valuable lessons in being self-sufficient (Mabokela & Magubane, 2004; Nunley, 2009; Winkle-Wagner, 2015).

The second most impactful influence is where, the context within which, children are raised. The area or community where one grows up is often used as a direct link to what others assume about your culture (Yosso, 2005; Uma & Walter, 2013). Often, there is little consideration for the powers, or lack of powers, parents can exercise over community influences, such as unsafe sex, violence, alcohol and drugs, which become the escape for youth. A community, whether judged as good or bad, is often where children find a sense of belonging (Pratt-Clarke, 2010; Sindic, 2011; Benjamin & Carolissen, 2015). The conditions can have as much impact on how the child socialises. Anderson *et al.* (2016:204) state: "Parental locus of control is the extent to which parents feel a sense of power and efficacy in child-rearing, and much of this work is concerned with the social location of its subjects."

Mirza (2009) says that children pick up attitudes from their parents which they are able to transfer to other areas of their lives. Studies show that parents not "monitoring" could be to the detriment of what they may try to teach their children (Anderson *et al.*, 2016). However, immediate social context or "neighbourhood" as a predictor of children's performance is minimised when parents feel that control of situations lie within themselves. This is what helps a stronger sense of identity and agency within the family than with "bad" elements from outside the home (Gergen & Davis, 1985; Schwartz *et al.*, 2005; Yuval-Davis, 2006;

Leibowitz, 2009). The child's internal locus of control is then further developed into what I call resilience, but what Anderson *et al.* (2016) call "grit" and "hope". These characteristics are used by the individual in other areas, such as her academic ability and financial independence. While the highly complex nature of family relationships can complicate matters, when parents are invested equally in girls as in boys, the propensity for academic success is increased (Waghid, 2001; Schwartz *et al.*, 2005; Fataar, 2010). Many Black and "coloured" families' traditions around the value of education has long been recognised or has changed over the past years (Mngoma, 1997). Society also tends to judge girls by their mothers' reputation and there are many theories about how girls want to be what their mothers are not (Mngoma, 1997). The more adults there are interested in a child's well-being, the more likely that child is to succeed.

If parents and society were to support girls in the same manner that they do boys, there will be an increase in the success rate of girls. Anderson *et al.* (2016) cites Cummings' (1977) study: that the impact of family dynamics is highly gendered. Emotional and school support, family size and aspirations account for 17% more fate variance among girls (27%) than boys (17%). Social impact plays the biggest role in both boys and girls, but less so for girls. Anderson *et al.* (2016) further notes other studies which show that there is lower fate control amongst Black children. The consequences of oppression are lasting, not only for the children of the oppressed slaves but for the children of the oppressive masters. The constraints experienced by Black students cannot be equalled to the struggles of anyone else and empathic understanding remains difficult (Gasperi *et al.*, 2012; Di'Angelo & Sensoy, 2012). These intersections affect families for generations, while those who benefit from the continued subservience of others deny their role. This is the importance of teachers who are aware of the social contexts where their charges are learning about life.

6.2.2 Belonging and inclusion

Sense of belonging is one factor which is necessary for success and is recognised by many locally and globally as an important factor for academic success (Yuval-Davis, 2006; Leibowitz, 2009; Nathan and Scobell, 2012b; Carolissen, 2016). Higher education academia may not have been initially intended for Black[4] women but we are here. It is not easy because we are fighting both system and people's mindsets. The lasting impact the social

[4] (Brown, 2000) I bear a "burden of racial hierarchy" over Black South Africans when described as "coloured". It is a term I do not prefer and use only as reference for clarity in this thesis.

and institutional hierarchies upon the confidence of white and male academics is evidence of who is felt to be in ownership of a space (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006). HEIs, especially can be a "hostile terrain" for Black women working as academics (hooks, 1994, 2000; Naicker, 2008). While many HWUs started out as exclusively white male research dominions, HBUs opened gave access to men and women students and academics so women feel more at ease in these institutions. Black women in HWUs can find that the expectation of assimilation for "careerism" (Carver & Chambers, 2008), and to get by reasonably, places her in an uncomfortable dilemma:

> *There is a grave difference between that engagement with white culture, which seeks to deconstruct, demystify, challenge, and transform, and gestures of collaboration and complicity. (hooks, 2009:131)*

The troublesome nature for the Black woman is that, if she succeeds in the white domain, she is judged as being complicit to white and male dominance. It is felt that she does this at the expense of the intersectional cause for equality, on the one hand. On the other hand, she is still seen by those in the institution, and possibly herself, as not good enough, always bearing the burden of proof. The culture of assimilation is a persistent issue (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006). White women may argue that they too must assimilate but there is a difference in joining people in academia who are of your own social culture and joining an entirely new culture. These issues need to be expressed and addressed honestly. It does not help the cause when participants in an institution assume what Vally and Dalamba (1999) have long ago referred to as the "ostrich position" of "colour blindness", attempting to just get over the past and taking the easy way out (Dill & Zambrana, 2009).

Despite resource constraints, the sense of belonging for those who study at a HBU can make experiences of academic growth more rewarding and confidence-building. However, if all Black women did this, the situation at HWUs would not be challenged to change and "keeps us marginalised" (Maodzwa-Taruvinga & Divala, 2014). The feeling that one belongs is conducive to success in this context (Cobb-Roberts & Agosto, 2011). Under-preparedness, as many first-generation students and academics find themselves to be marked (Boughey & Niven, 2012; Kiguwa, 2014), in an unwelcoming atmosphere, sacrificing the sense to belong, can seem an easier way out so that "we can just get on with the job" of succeeding academically (Mckenna, 2012b; Lewin & Mawoyo, 2014).

There are a number of studies about student experiences in seeking "social inclusion" and "epistemological access" in HEIs (Badat, 2010; Boughey, 2012; Lewin & Mawoyo, 2014). During 2015 to 2017, students and academics across the country protested against selective practices of redressing the past inequalities which slows down transformation. Most notable was the #RhodesMustFall protests, exposing the intense dissatisfaction of mostly Black students that statues of the colonial era still stood as central icons at out universities. The sense of entitlement shown by mostly white men and women in institutions is seldom an attitude shared by Black women (Yuval-Davis, 2006; Di Masso, 2015). White people publicly vilified students for their acts of destruction of 'public' property without acknowledging the type of violence shown in maintaining white culture at institutions. In recent years this is also evidenced on various public social media platforms, which is a throwback to the Apartheid era inequities (Langa, 2017) and a longing for a bygone era.

Contexts are selectively inclusive of certain people at certain times. Contexts are created within space and time but controlled by groups of people (Cobb-Roberts & Agosto, 2011). Black women finding spaces to exercise their voices as academics and professionals, depends largely on who we know will listen (Villar & Albertín, 2010; Divala, 2014; Ndebele & Maphosa, 2014; Hernandez *et al.*, 2015). Unconscious socialisation is when people are unaware and when this is highlighted, they become resistant to acknowledging their own habits and actions. Furthermore, they are resistant to the "othered" person's perspective. The "unsupportive academic climate" Cobb-Roberts and Agosto (2011:7) speak of is not necessarily deliberately created, but this is no excuse to continually deny the Black experience when it is highlighted. I have shared articles with colleagues on issues of privilege and wilful unconsciousness. Most have refused to read much less engage with these issues. This means that it will be consistently difficult for Black women to find their spaces and voices in HEIs and the progress towards becoming transformed institutions will be continually slow and paced for the comfort of white people.

Postgraduate level was an almost impossible dream, hindered by deliberate structural difficulties for people of colour and cultural constraints for Black women (Mohope, 2014; Ndlovu, 2014). It is as though HEIs can tolerate Black women up to a certain level but not beyond. Racism, as with sexism, has become institutionalised, pervasive and normative throughout our education (Crenshaw, 1989; hooks, 2000; DeLeon, 2010), but especially in the higher levels. Institutional hierarchies persist because they serve those at the top of structures who benefit most (Gillborn, 2009). They also persist because, like invisible laws,

academic theories and ways of doing support hierarchies instead of allowing for new theories to be structures (Collins, 2000; hooks, 2013). Institutional hierarchies are guises behind which racism and sexism in individuals and institutions continue to exist and flourish. Indigenous knowledge and qualitative studies, such as autoethnographic experiences, are deemed "second class" and non-academic (Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Keane *et al.*, 2016) White men and white women are born into our society designed for their success (Schroeder & Di'Angelo, 2010; Sue, 2011). Their lives are set on a pathway with various gradations of the advantages which are preparatory for success and ownership.

PhD level research requires one to work in isolation. Demands to "develop" and change to something different to my nature as a highly social being, quite taxing (Carter, Blumenstein & Cook, 2013; Van Schalkwyk, 2012b; McKenna, 2016). I become motivated each time I am able to talk about my research, whether formally or informally.

Davids (2012:15) says that "Apartheid was brutally simple: White was superior to Black … It was the colour of your skin that mattered". South African nationality and citizenship cannot just be named as unifying factors to magically undo the past or do what we expect it to do (Davids, 2012; Carolissen, 2016). Being Black and a woman, as the most othered citizens, have made the struggle infinitely more complex. Currently we fight abstract perceptions of taking up space, non-belonging, prejudices and invisibility which are harder to prove and address. Gillborn (2002) describes racism as "crude and violent" but states that it is also subtle. Gilroy (1992) says that warnings of "over-identifying" the innuendos, suggestions and feelings as racism and sexism means that those experiencing it are asked to deny our perceptions (Gillborn, 2002).

There are many complex factors which add to the exclusion of Black women from certain positions (Mirza, 2009). Continued absence of Black women in these domains further reduces us to lesser citizens. Media representation is one way of continuing "barriers" which ensure the "reduction of a group or category of people" to stereotypes (Haslanger, 2000; Benjamin, 2014). In higher education, challenging institutional racism and sexism has merely led to renaming it as "culture and traditions".

Inside this microcosm of our work groups is a struggle for education and political freedom which should not be ignored. Previous attitudes of there was only "us" and no "they" (Yuval-Davis, 2010) should no longer be entertained. A sense of identity, where differences are appreciated, creates a "permeable boundary" between "self" and "us" and a common

political goal of social justice. It becomes an increasingly precarious collusion, in the light of movements such as #FeesMustFall and #WomenAgainstGender-basedViolence, not to "resist assimilation to the social hierarchy" (Hernandez *et al.*, 2015; Pillay, 2015).

6.3 Persistent barriers for Black women academics

Mazurek, Winzer and Majorek (2000) explain the segregation process of the education system in South Africa. Separatism has had a huge impact on perceptions of who belongs in certain institutions and who does not. After integration of all HEIs, the stigma of research or teaching institutions remains. Where race, class and gender do not distract from teaching and learning, more focus can be given accessing and creating knowledge (Hughes, 2008b). Education under shared socio-cultural conditions "instilled in its recipients important clusters of personal and social confidence, self-efficacy and aspirational leadership possibilities that should have collectively elevated the lot of concerned communities" (Abdi cited in Soudien, 2017:17). This is not to say that race and gender should be ignored, but when there is no cohesive shared value system toward social justice, the experiences in educational spaces can be extremely negative for some of the people. The intersection of race and gender cannot be denied and are not always "mutually exclusive" (Crenshaw, 1989). Institutional racism and sexism is a reflection of that of broader society (Gillborn, 2002; Law, Phillips & Turney, 2004; Kiguwa, 2014). Black people experience these displays daily in public spaces.

Tenacity or grit wears down (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). Advancing my studies at an institution that has a culture where I often feel misunderstood and unacknowledged would be more difficult if my colleagues did not attempt to understand my personal challenges. However, support by a few people within the institution is certainly not enough for the advancement even of tenacious Black women. I think that we can only begin to get to an understanding of these intricacies when we investigate the perceptions we hold of others and the power dynamics we habitually practice. Expressing *voice* as opposed to *being silenced* is an attempt to disclose the assertion of patriarchal power over Black women. We need to develop notions of position in research and shifting ideas to post-colonial African feminist theory. Rejecting the marginalisation of Black women's research is paramount to changing the social and institutional contexts. This is a social responsibility of Black women for future generations (Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010:630).

6.3.1 Close detractors: Black men and white women

> *Honey, de white man is de ruler of everything as fur as Ah been able tuh find out. Maybe it's some place way off in de ocean de Black man is in power, but we don't know nothin' but what we see. So de white man throw down de load and tell de nigger man tuh pick it up. He pick it up because he have to, but he don't tote it. He hand it to his womenfolk. De nigger woman is de mule us de world so fur as Ah can see – Zola Neal Hurston, 1937:16* (Nathan and Scobell, 2012a)

Lugones (2007) so clearly argues that colonialism brought upon Black women new oppressive and powerful structures of racial and "social classification" (2007:190). She says that the degrees of feminist complexity for women of colour and "Third World feminisms have consistently shown the way to a critique of this indifference to this deep imbrication of race, gender, class, and sexuality." (2007:187). Of the important issues she raises, the one which most interests me is what she describes as the "indifference of nonwhite men to the violences exercised against nonwhite women" (2007:197) and "who have been racialized as inferior, exhibit to the systematic violence inflicted upon women of colo[u]r" (2007:188). She rightly blames the further or exacerbated oppression on these men. In the same vein, there are white women who are feminist for the very reason that they have seen the oppression of their mothers and other women in society. Yet, they fail to recognise or choose to ignore the triple impact of class, race and gender borne by Black women (Bailey & Cuomo, 2008:63, 264). Black men and white women are not blind to Black women's oppression; they are complicit in everyday and institutional oppression of women of colour. Black men and white women who willingly assimilate, are favoured in the transformation process and seemingly give no second thought to Black women who should be favoured (Yosso, 2005; Carolissen & Bozalek, 2017).

The role Black women played in the right to tertiary education worldwide, as well as in South Africa, for example during the #FeesMustFall movement as in the struggle against Apartheid, is indication that rising women leadership as voices of dissent exist (Lewis & Hendricks, 2017). Black women have to be braver but not draw too much attention lest she be seen as unfeminine (hooks, 2008; Pease, 2010). Also, to now be the only voice of dissent and being seen as fighting for your own purpose instead of for the entire Black population, makes the fight for equality more difficult as it seems selfish. These are the ways by which Black men as race theorists and white women as feminist theorist lay guilt upon Black women. When Black women are no longer in service of them and fail to be "obedient" and

less "valued" (Nathan and Scobell, 2012a). In order for transformation to gain momentum, "going against the grain" is inevitable (Hoagland in Bailey & Cuomo, 2008:529). Working to change the culture of institutions that keeps sexism, racism and white supremacy in place" (Schroeder & Di'Angelo, 2010) is a necessary task for everyone.

6.3.2 Mentorship

The lack of mentorship for Black women academics to develop the "necessary skills" is one more point raised by researchers (Portnoi, 2003; Subbaye & Dhunpath, 2016). The skills or capital which are appreciated in academia are not those which Black women academics possess and, if we do, they are not recognised. Furthermore, there is little recognition for new skills we may offer the institution. Studies of equity in universities in South Africa do not address the fact that while a number of universities can boast a significant increase in the number of Black women employed at the institution, this does not mean that these women hold senior management or academic positions. Very often these are second careers for Black women starting at an average age of 37 years (Subbaye & Dhunpath, 2016) where they are still configuring their academic identities. The numbers for Black women in senior positions, however, are still much lower than for any other group, and thus still seen as unusual in the context of higher education.

It requires a particular kind of bravery to enter alone into a world where nothing is familiar, and bravery is exhausting. On the other hand, when one feels that an institution is your domain, becoming part of the institution is not a huge mission, belonging success is somewhat eased (Trowler, 2001). The step in between coming in from the outside as a stranger into a new role is most often missed when there is no-one to guide, warn of pitfalls, or just offer quiet camaraderie (Mohope, 2014). In order to be assured to "come to know" theoretical knowledge, it has to be part of one's "social world", otherwise there can lay little claim of social justice in such learning and teaching (Yosso, 2005; Cobb-Roberts & Agosto, 2011). Mentoring is not simply offering advice to new academics but also opening spaces for collaboration and showing appreciation of newcomers to a culture (Van Schalkwyk, 2012b; Leibowitz *et al.*, 2016; McKenna, 2016). Similar to student access without support, giving Black women academic positions and not ensuring mentors for both further studies and functioning in their academic roles, is unfair. Academic mentoring can be the difference between failure and success (Msimanga, 2014; Ndlovu, 2014).

6.3.3 Burden of proof

Black scholars entering traditionally white dominated domains is becoming more common whereas white dominated domains are not as ready to accept the ideas of these scholars (Haslanger, 2000; Schroeder & Di'Angelo, 2010; Hasford, 2016). Young Black women students must work harder to prove their worth at access and also in order to succeed. Someone coming in from the margins can either ignore the urge to express herself, wait for acceptance or forcefully push for acknowledgement in conversations, meetings and areas of research. The silencing is so habitual that her voice is often also absent from minutes of meetings and recordings of events just as she had been excluded from history books – so being physically present can mean that she is still absent from literature (Gasperi *et al.*, 2012; Sue, 2015). Kiguwa (2014) states that there are ways of absentising Blackness by whites and womanness by men. The absence of the Black woman's voice has been comfortable and maintaining the silence "by speaking over her" as if she had not uttered a word, speaks to the continued irrelevance of the interlocking of race and gender (Davis & Maldonado, 2015).

The situation changes, however, when she becomes a teacher and is now relevant to students' passing. There is a new discomfort as she stands in front of a class of white students who disrespect her, wanting evidence of her authority. Black women find that they must traverse the same barriers of scrutiny over and over again. This burden can be placed on generation upon generation irrespective of whether the Black woman is the servant who proves her honesty, the student who proves her academic worth or lecturer proving her knowledge. The hierarchical exercises shift with her from one institution to the other (Carver & Chambers, 2008; Maodzwa-Taruvinga & Divala, 2014). Each time her context shifts the onus is on her to show her skills in addition to her qualifications and past experience. She bears the brunt, as her mother and grandmother before her, even in different contexts (Dill & Zambrana, 2009).

These shifts also happen where she keeps having to prove herself, which can be as simple as moving from staffroom to lecture halls. Pittman (2010) indicates that "disrespect of scholarly expertise" can be experienced by Black women from especially white male students as well as colleagues. It is as though they need evidence that she is able to offer relevant knowledge. Clegg refers to Bernstein (2000) and Maton (2013) when she discusses what legitimises regional knowledge. The need is to take academia beyond what is seen as

"powerful knowledge". Ontological and "others'" knowledge contexts are in this way acknowledged as legitimately influencing considerations of curriculum change (Clegg, 2016). Black women academics are disrespected because of her perceived roles in society. She may be ignored or dismissed by fellow academics, administrative staff and students alike, and not being part of the dominant group, her experiences are easily denied. Unless these issues are addressed, Black women especially start to doubt their sensitivities about the denial and disrespect of the value of her knowledge and experiences to institutions (Mabokela & Mawila, 2004).

Black women are considered least deserving of respect while their experiences may be less obvious, more nuanced and therefore more difficult to address. The racism/sexism/classism is insidious, often subconscious and denied (Bailey & Cuomo, 2008; Akala & Divala, 2016). When others act as though Black people do not have ethical values or should not be sensitive about having their values questioned, this makes for continual unpleasant experiences (Yuval-Davis, 2006; Lewis & Hendricks, 2017; Keane *et al.*, 2016). However, with so much literature on Black experiences, it is inexcusable to remain uninformed.

6.3.4 White privilege and fragility

White privilege is such a normal condition that it is not visible to white people (Sue, 2011; Henkeman, 2016a). Worse still is that it is denied at any attempts to raise awareness of it, while others are not allowed any means of advantage if not belonging to a white group (Gillborn, 2008; hooks, 2013). White minority languages, claimed as their own, may not be threatened at the expense of generations of previously disadvantaged people. Attitudes and practices can easily drive away those who feel marginalised by the perceived superiority of one group (white male) being supported by the others (white women and Black men) (Di Masso, 2015). White women's attempts at being portrayed as fragile and blameless while they benefit from the oppression of Black women is a preferred privilege often supported by white and, often, Black men (Pease, 2010:11). Pratt-Clarke (2010:40) explains:

> *These identities [of race, class, gender] can have varying degrees of privilege, entitlement, conferred dominance, and unearned advantage associated with them. These identities often shape the experiences of individuals as reflected in their narratives, discourses, stories, and life experiences. These narratives and life stories occur within specific contexts and the legitimacy of these narratives, particularly of oppression, are often challenged, silenced, or re-created with different voices and versions.*

Black narratives often remain untold due to white sensitivity about feeling blamed for Black suffering (Di'Angelo & Sensoy, 2012). Denial and arguments, instead of acknowledging that white and male privilege exists for a part of the population, is a way of stalling change. White and male privilege blinds people to issues of how language, money and culture always play in their favour (West, 2006; Schroeder & Di'Angelo, 2010; Gasperi *et al.*, 2012; Carolissen & Bozalek, 2017). Speaking out promotes awareness but also opens one up to criticism. This makes it almost hopeless that other voices will follow suit when Black women should just obtain the right to get on with their lives without unusual difficulty.

"Oppression is a process that seeks to make people believe that what the social order offers is good and should not be changed" (Divala, 2014:2084). The thing that makes a radical woman's voice radical is that she speaks out against a social order which others do not (Gergen & Davis, 1985; Pittman, 2010; Hasford, 2016).

The "othered" has for a long time temperately requested that white academia acknowledge that dominance in academia, as in other spheres, is a privilege enjoyed by only them. This privilege is paired with a pervasive culture and materialism that remain unquestioned. White ignorance, wilful or otherwise (Costandius, 2012), is a comfort zone as long as intersections of class, race and gender in its various strata are not addressed and there is some maintenance of separatism. Higher education top academic positions for Black academics will remain an almost impossible goal for as long as there are only civil or conservative Black academics who serve as the intended "African hand-maiden of apartheid" (Amuwo, 2004:66). "The project of "whiteness" remains invisible to itself" (Soudien, 2010:6).

6.3.5 Patience and demand for change

Fanon (1963) has warned that merely waiting for institutions to become more inclusive may see disenfranchised students adopt for drastic measures in the demands for decolonised spaces. Black women, stepping in to positions in HEIs, is infringing on the space of everyone above her in the social hierarchies. She is seen as a threat even to Black men, as Pratt-Clarke (2010:78) uses the example to describe their new positionality in society alongside white men and women:

> *The social problem in the Detroit Male Academy initiative involved interwoven socially constructed individual and group identities, interlocking social systems and structures, and ideologies of power, privilege, entitlement, and domination. The urban male was the*

> *socially constructed race, class, and gender category. The interlocking social systems, structures, and institutions were the education system.*

In South Africa, the promises of educational reform in the 1997 White paper, just after the end of Apartheid, have not been realised and this lack has been met 20 years later with what is seen as impatience on the part of the youth and some academics. The 2015–2017 #FeesMustFall and Decolonisation movements in South Africa is a call by students to be heard and to take power of their academic and economic circumstances (Leibowitz *et al.*, 2017; Langa, 2017). While this cause seems to be gender-neutral and more race-specific because of the vast number of impoverished Black people, the benefits in the end still take on the old hierarchy.

Collins (2000) refers to Harriet Jacobs, a fair, straight-haired enslaved woman which made her amenable to white men. This is not very different when a Black woman academic enters the arena of HE. There is again a cultural ideal where she may be differently but no less restricted by expectations to blend. The notion of correcting race and gender appearance and behaviours to fit a standard is detracting from educational goals. There is also the difficulty of discerning "perceived" versus "real" discrimination and oppression within a dominant culture because often we are told that what we perceive as discriminatory was not the intention. These dialogues are difficult to initiate and difficult to engage in because of feelings of blame, guilt and being accusatory reverts the burden on the othered (Sue *et al.*, 2009).

Many institutions holding on to power with what is seen as "powerful knowledge" and maintaining social structures (Clegg, 2015). Cultures within institutions serve to favour specific attitudes about who is dominant and who remains marginalised.

Having a dual insider-outsider experience is something many Black academics can relate to. Being part of a group in a certain aspect but not sharing the rest of the cultural practices is part of the territory which comes with being a newcomer. However, for Black women especially, this experience is double-edged in both the institution as well as in her family, as she is most likely to be a first generation student (Van Schalkwyk, 2012a; Van Schalkwyk *et al.*, 2015; Connor, 2016; Mabokela, 2017). Within her institution, this is often not a temporary condition either but can be lasting as she belongs neither to the white nor the male club. Others share a connection beyond the group: gender, class, race, family make-up, social status. In addition is her different critical understanding of what decolonisation

means that often makes her feel outside of the "norm" in the contexts being traversed (Lorde, 1993; Brown, 2000; Clegg, 2016). Operating in "the middle ground", says DeLeon (2010), is to bear the "markers of identity" as we navigate life deciding who we are, where we belong but also either accept or challenge power relations.

An advantage of being this insider-outsider, is that Black women have the position of opening new pathways, encouraging "proliferation" and new ways of thinking in academe (Bamberg & Andrews, 2004; Lather, 2006; Hughes, 2008b; Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010).

Our political projects become how we are identified by others and identify ourselves: activist, academic, feminist. Identifying as insider-outsider within a "racialized normative society" means engaging with issues from an individualised stance which affects how we perceive others and interpret our data (Kiguwa, 2014:288). Black women, unlike others, also grapple deeply with her own sense of identity as a "radical identity" should be created through critical thought of self as well as of others, culture and structures. DeLeon (2010:407) asserts that within our institutions we are racialised and classified in hierarchical schemes and this is especially relevant in South Africa and colonial and colonised mind-sets. There is a need to identify what issues are worth taking forward, even if these actions make us seem radical. DeLeon (2010) and Hughes (2008) suggest that autoethnographic research is a way of breaking down hierarchies, the "social ills" which follow such hierarchies and also the individual's role in maintaining "relationships of domination". Being oblivious to the existence of Black women is so commonplace that erasure is hardly noticed and easily excused. Film director, Sofia Ford Coppola, released a period film in 2015, *The Beguiled*, about the experiences of women during the Confederate War in America. The film is based on the book but excludes a main character, the outspoken Black woman. Another mixed-race race woman, a central character in the book, is erased and replaced by a blonde. Similarly, Cleopatra's continued portrayal as a tanned, white woman voids Black women from history. One more example is the portrayal of the story of *Kratoa*, the Bushman woman who became the liaison between the white Afrikaner settlers and the Khoi people of the Cape. While she is the central character and enjoys much screen time, the white Afrikaners are somewhat vindicated in the film. Part of the blame for this is placed firmly at Kratoa's feet, and the villainous Jan van Riebeeck is portrayed as a charming man who is forgiven for his rape of the protagonist. While these examples seemingly have little to do with higher education, it makes it easier to relate to these more public displays of

erasure than to show where they exist in higher education. Erasure is much harder to prove in higher education because Black women are either over-looked in meetings or simply not present in the minutes of meetings. Their ideas are often recorded as translated by white men or women. This truth about erasure is echoed in Mabokela's writing (Mabokela, 2000; Mabokela & Magubane, 2004).

Dill and Zambrana (2009:xi) state that "proclaiming that racism is dead", that "women are equal to men" and the "erasure of poverty" makes intersectional feminist studies critical in analysing the inequities white privilege attempts to hide (Rogers, McLean & Mentor, 2019). hooks (2013) states that ideas of white supremacy are insidious and come from various sources outside of our control. Blind to their sense of privilege and "deeply ingrained stereotypes, misconceptions and fears" (hooks, 2013:89; Daniels, 2010; Davids, 2012). This ignorance in effect leaves the Black individual with feelings of defeat and erasure. Ultimately, it influences the experience of belonging, whether studying or working in these environments (Clegg, 2016).

6.4 Changing positionality of Black women in higher education

In many Black or indigenous family and community set ups, relationships may not be similarly linear or separated. Men and women's roles can be different but not unequal in importance or relevance to a successful family or community make-up; individuality takes a far second place to common good (Chouinard & Cousins, 2007; Keane *et al.*, 2016).

6.4.1 A different kind of feminism

Certain issues separate African from Western feminisms, the biggest being that Western feminism is not intersectional. On the other hand, intersectional feminism recognises the struggle of all women with the recognition that Black women often have the most intersecting factors affecting her (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins & Bilge, 2016). In African feminism, where cultural and family positions are seen as operating side by side or complementary to common good, Westernised cultures have hierarchies where competition is valued (Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010; Lewis & Hendricks, 2017). The hierarchy of white male dominance, at the narrow apex, leans most heavily on the Black woman at the broad base for menial, domestic, care-giver occupations (West, 1995, 2006). There is little contact between these two as they are furthest removed from each other with little acknowledgement or recognition from the top and mirrored in academic spaces. White

males can claim that because they have to continuously be looking ahead for the betterment of the institution, they are not responsible for the realities faced by those at the bottom. Depending on the context, Black males and white women are the overseers of Black women. As long as these hierarchies exist, white women and Black men have a "vested interest" in her position at the bottom (Sue, 2011; Maodzwa-Taruvinga & Divala, 2014; hooks, 2015:16).

The idea that all women suffer the same constraints in higher education is untrue. Aiming specifically at understanding the racial and gender divisions as they affect the Black woman's experience is key to unsettling the contexts where Black women experience an "imposter" syndrome and where few succeed (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010; Akala & Divala, 2016). The polarisation which still exists in the South African higher education system is much more than the lasting effect of years of unequal education (Mabokela, 2000; hooks, 2008; Leibowitz, Garraway & Farmer, 2015).

6.4.2 Changing discourses

Policies alone cannot address the culture created by dominant discourse in our institutions (Elder-Vass, 2010; Mayson & Schapper, 2012; Hasford, 2016). Narratives of Black women show that prejudices which remain in attitudes and perceptions towards Black women in academic spaces have continued their negative impact despite policy changes (Mabokela, 2000; Beckmann, 2009; Dill & Zambrana, 2009). The literature supports the notion that Black women who achieve degrees have managed to overcome enough of their constraints to be considered equal to men and white women in critical skills required for academic success (Mabokela *et al.*, 2004; Mirza, 2009; Nunley, 2009). These constraints include racism, sexism, class-divisions, as well as lesser but related factors of poverty, which affects Black women most severely (Portnoi, 2003; Behari-Leak, 2017). This must mean whatever hindrances exist to changing the positionality of Black women is situated at the interplay between individual and culture at the particular level in the workplace. When Black bodies, especially women, are centred contending for position, it is often considered an act of anarchy or a transgression (hooks, 2006; DeLeon, 2010). Even within feminist communities, Black women's issues are negated because critical awareness to social justice should focus there but is denied (Crenshaw, 1989; Gouws, 2005). The legacies of Apartheid have had an impact on the "practices and attitudes" within our universities (Kiguwa, 2014; Maodzwa-Taruvinga & Divala, 2014; Akala & Divala, 2016). White women and Black

men, positioned in the middle rungs, could feel most threatened by those over whom they had been placed in the hierarchy (West, 2006; Pease, 2010; Davis & Maldonado, 2015).

Davis and Maldonado (2015) speak extensively on the challenges with which "othered" women in these positions have to contend – from being "invisible" to being "demoted" depending on her course of action. Collins (2000:220) says that getting to top positions in higher education is where Black women learn the inner mechanisms and can start processes to change structures. Cobb-Roberts and Agosto (2011) support the notion that for Black women who "work in academia, there are also academic spaces where racism and sexism continue to assault the development of their academic identity and sense of membership or belonging". They too warn that "the daily microinsults, microinvalidations and micro-assaults against Black women faculty that appear over and over" (2011:9), the burden of "othermothering" (2011:10) takes its toll. Staying and forming alliances, building capacity can be the aims, but still Black women are often overlooked and working for change often has negative effects on their career trajectories.

Once a Black women gets to a top managerial or academic position she is both stereotyped and judged for taking up as well as not doing enough for social justice (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). One possible reason is that the indigenously appreciative ways she builds and encourages socially just research methods are not recognised and valued (Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010; Keane *et al.,* 2016). Another possible reason is that being involved in transformation is often in addition to the actual job she had been assigned and her performance is not appraised on this work but it still saps her energy. So she is always involved in, what Judith Butler refers to in her book title, *Precarious Politics* (Carver & Chambers, 2008); in a position where she tries to balance the academic project as well as the social justice project.

The decolonisation debate holds that much of the philosophy of education has its roots in the African continent (Cobb-Roberts & Agosto, 2011; Liccardo & Botsis, 2015; Akala & Divala, 2016). Denialisms of this view could fail to see but the repressive structures of colonisation of most of Africa by Europe have created not only a racial disparity but has furthered the gender challenges faced by Black women (Lugones, 2007; Lewis & Hendricks, 2017). These structures are supported within the domain of higher educational culture and curricula (Leibowitz, 2014; Clegg, 2016). The challenge to manage inadequate

attempts at reparation within our institutions without placing the responsibility to change, assimilate and belong solely on Black people.

Black women's voices need to be heard if the longed for "emancipation" from the struggle towards equity is to be achieved (hooks, 1994; Divala, 2014). Exerting oneself within institutions requires an unfair advantage while also is a disadvantage requiring extra energy and bravery. The need exists to encourage individual academics to reflect on the possible influences they enter the institutions with and then find in a balanced and comprehensive way of tempering the harmful constraining influences on Black women within the institutions. Our professional lives can be enhanced by reflecting on who we are and why we are who we are (Johns & Marlin, 2010; Leibowitz, Garraway & Farmer, 2015).

Historical and cultural social structures idealise Black women in traditional roles of caring and teaching. Also many Black women come to academic careers later in life, having first raised children and done community work closer to home (Msimanga, 2014; Akala & Divala, 2016). The result is that Black women with a desire for further education find themselves in social sciences rather than in any of the other faculties such as economic, engineering and natural sciences. This has created the perception that Black women do not have the cognitive skill for "hard" or natural sciences. It is further exacerbated by the notion that social sciences are soft-skills and that the same amount of cognitive ability is not necessary as for the natural sciences. The relation between natural sciences and indigenous knowledge is seldom recognised (Clegg, 2016). So, self-authored qualitative research of Black women in academic roles outside of social sciences is hard to find (Freeman, 1993; Rappapor, 1995; Mabokela, 2000; Andrews *et al.,* 2008). Black women also work multiple times harder with less support than their white and male counterparts to achieve the same goals. Making the choice to reflect on our own lives rather than researching academic fields is a luxury few of us can afford (Ndlovu, 2014).

Observations of the structural history and status of higher education affects negatively on the positioning of Black women yet is seldom acknowledged in perceptions of Black women not being able to be present in other sciences (Mckenna, 2012; Leibowitz, Bozalek, Van Schalkwyk & Winberg, 2015). Academic pathways for Black people towards success are fundamentally different than for white men and white women (Ndebele, Muhuro & Nkonki, 2016; Leibowitz, Bozalek, Farmer, Garraway *et al.*, 2017).

6.4.3 Acknowledging Black women's narratives

The narrated histories are used as a directive to create frameworks which will address the past in its current and future interactions. Due to gross past inequalities, ingrained attitudes and perceptions, and the generational effects of these inequities, equity seems far off. Equity can never be considered as mere "levelling of the playing fields", yet men and white women are not even willing to consider equality. The process has to continue with dissocialising the people of South Africa of the notion that the solely white cultural capital has value. The revolution requires ultimatums of protests towards a sense of belonging for all.

Those attitudes which are taught about racial and gender boundaries can be crossed (Bailey & Cuomo, 2008:43). Black girls, once grown, can achieve their dreams of HE if they are grown in confidence and supported by community (hooks, 2003; Yosso, 2005; Hasford, 2016).

The challenge, however, is trying to engage in conversation, grapple with the intricate web of issues which are made more difficult when white people counter your stories with their own "struggle" narratives (West, 2006; Schroeder & Di'Angelo, 2010; Di'Angelo & Sensoy, 2012). For Black people, this was not as simple – even coming from a middle-class background did not excuse the colour of your skin (Pittman, 2010; Kiguwa, 2014). Divisions of race, gender, class and culture cannot suddenly be forgotten. Poor students would be welcome at the best institutions of higher learning only if they were willing to surrender memory, to forget the past and claim the assimilated present as the only worthwhile and meaningful reality (hooks, 2000; Stevenson & Clegg, 2012; Salem, 2016).

Bravery, strength and outspokenness takes time, effort and headspace because the other view to be wary of is that of the loudmouth Black woman (Vally & Dalamba, 1999; Carolissen *et al.,* 2012). Black women are expected to be silent commodities who ought to have been taught their place in society (West, 1995; Bailey & Cuomo, 2008). Outside of the roles as servants, single mothers, sexually promiscuous, vacuous, loud-mouthed and angry (Dill & Zambrana, 2009:10) she has little value. Bailey and Cuomo (2008) say that "[m]ale dominance is sexual", which places all women in dangerous positions in society, including the workplace. The experience of many Black women is that white and Black male dominance places her in a position of violence (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 2000; hooks, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

"Subjugation" of Black girls and women is expansively enabled by cultural, economic and social systems. Under the guise of paternal protection or political domination, the comfort of other human beings lies in their dominant position over the Black woman. Maintaining these structures through any means whether "intimidation and fear, or specific rewards", is critical to the convenience of the subjugator (Henkeman, 2016b). Critique of these social systems is thus seldom welcomed by those who benefit most (Butler, 2005) Like checkerboard pieces, Black girls and women are placed where needed for the convenience of those in charge. Society is set up so that a Black woman is easily accessible for white and male favour (Collins, 2000), yet never fully acceptable and belonging. She is easily uprooted, displaced and replaced. Black girls and women spend their lives actively halting the systems against them and have to work to transforming the systems within their contexts, because these are seldom set up to serve her (Nunley, 2009; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Akala & Divala, 2016). Unless this is done, she remains educationally, economically and culturally enslaved. This requires an amount of continuous courage which is not expected to the same extent of anyone else.

The case in many societies is that white and male are favoured while the outcomes for Black girls and women in almost any relationship are less favourable (Haslanger, 2000). Children with a wider world view fair better (Tierney, 1998) but becomes impossible for most Black children. Social ills cause poorer children to drop out of school and often take up adult responsibilities (Benjamin, 2014). The value often ascribed to class and proximity to whiteness is inescapable in a society that appreciates economic and white beauty as standard. The Black girl and woman is objectified by her physical appearance (Davids, 2012; Nathan and Scobell, 2012a) which is either sexualised or abhored. This is also evident in academia, where others note tidy (straightened) hair and good behaviours associated with whiteness as indications of a person's intellectual worth (Kiguwa, 2014). A Black person's presence alone can be seen as a comment against the norms of interaction or being (Sue, 2011)

The important message is that the intersections for each individual is unique and that blanket policies and practices cannot specifically address the problems for all Black women in positions in our institutions. I argue that progression in education and research determines that non-linear designs, which allow for "multiple emergent knowledges", be legitimated (Lather, 2006). The social, cultural and educational background of the entire society, especially as it affects Black girls, must be recognised as key factors. The enablers and

constraints must be recognised an expressed. The implication is discomfort for everyone involved. A paradigmatic shift is needed – one which allows for continuous shifts towards the inclusion of Black women in all aspects affecting society, the economy and education. Paradigmatic engagement will be for everyone as the realisation is that the scenes in education, especially higher education, cannot be permanently set levels of academic positions which are attainable for some but not for others.

Black women in South African higher education still account for approximately 70% of administrative and 95% of service (cleaning and maintenance) staff. Not much has changed over the years since 1998 when Black women first entered HEIs with academic degrees (Mabokela, 2003; Maodzwa-Taruvinga & Divala, 2014; Akala & Divala, 2016; Mabokela & Mlambo, 2017). For these reasons, it is imperative that universities delve deeper in investigating the issues that keep Black women at these levels. Not enough has been done and the current equity policies further hinder the progress of Black women by not referring to the specific needs of redress (Beckmann, 2009; Badat, 2010). Support, financial or otherwise, means little to Black women staff and their children who wish to pursue higher education studies and careers if the policies and government fail to target the processes that hinder. The talk that deals with the continued underrepresentation and the influencing factors of Black women in top academic positions in higher education, South Africa, is soft. Academia's silence about the realities of our experiences and perceptions by and about us influences our interactions as students, teachers and researchers in white-dominated domains. Take notice of when and how the history of Black women is told. This may be that we are "new" to the culture and that we assimilate into the culture. We get busy with getting on with the work of academia. We fear that our positionality, to many including other Black people, will expose that because of race, class and gender, we do not possess the valued attributes. Once they become busy with academic work and new challenges, their challenges in achieving their academic positions are shifted to the back of their memories and concerns. Furthermore, their efforts in achieving are clumped together as experiences of "all women" or "all Black" people. Those in junior academic positions also bear the heaviest workload (hooks, 2003; Mabokela *et al.*, 2004; Cobb-Roberts & Agosto, 2011). Individual narratives separate us from the rest and prevent us from being considered homogenous (Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010; Roxå, 2015). However, the opportunities to share and record our stories seldom arise so they get lost in time and work.

Unless we reflect upon the past and recognise why and how the past affects the present actions and narrate these reflections, we will not understand why the interplay happens as it does. By we, I refer to individuals and institutions.

The constraints which white males experience can often be directly traced to their own or immediate family's decisions. Despite the constraints, society offers the white male more solutions to their struggles than Black women would find in their repertoire. Black women's enablers are most often opportunities she seeks out and decides to take up despite. It is often a struggle for her to take up these enablers.

In order to grow critical thinkers through education, institutions should be critical of our contexts. Impactful micro and macro day-to-day interplay on a multi-level landscape plays a significant role in transformational processes. The higher education system is set up as a dominant structure within which dominant and less dominant cultures and sub-cultures exist in hierarchical ways (Essed, 1992; Nunley, 2009; Holt, 2012). As academic and professional staff we either dominate or assimilate. We are kept busy learning, teaching, researching and publishing in this discourse. The status quo persists on a macro level, but what happens on the meso and micro level interactions? This thesis tests whether Black women at least earn the respect on an individual basis. Few of us, irrespective of gender and race, recognise the oppressive structures and cultures where we exist and interact. If we do, these issues are so seldom discussed that a vocabulary or descriptive has hardly developed, leaving little leeway to challenge the structures and cultures. We must recognise that our mind-sets come from a past of being stifled in and about our "political situations and struggles" (Lave, 2012:158). Working against the grain is acknowledging "the complexity" "of teaching, learning and social practices" in institutions (Bozalek, Leibowitz, Carolissen & Boler, 2013:1, 52). Against the grain recognises Black women's exclusion and white men's entitlement in academia, and having this view seldom occurs without being labelled a "stirrer". How do we move beyond the hopelessness and bring about desired results towards "social justice" without first and foremost recognising the marginalisation of Black girls and women?

The factors mentioned above enforce upon us, as Black women, dialectic choice (Nathan and Scobell, 2012a; Butler, 2013): continuing to be silent as those burdened to prove, hampered by past inequalities and uncomfortable within structures and cultures is a stressful play in the higher education domain. This is especially so for the methodical activist agents

for social justice, leaving notes for others, in turn, to build on, critique or unpack. Younger prospective academics cannot be left the same struggle legacy we have come through, if not fully overcome. There are arguments for and against "the crossing of knowledge boundaries", as Black women are expected to do, as we compete with white men and women (and maybe some Black men) to succeed in academia. In her doctoral thesis, Leibowitz (2001) looks at the possibility of boundary crossing and makes significant contribution to the "permeability" of knowledges. This is important understanding as I attempt to convince that Black women are on par for academic positions, in some instances better positioned due to empirical evidence of our trajectories.

For those marginalised, it means taking up the courage to argue that their knowledge holds value and the research has rigour, not only for themselves but for the generations of Black girls being raised in this country. This means that new researchers are to dictate frameworks and allaying fears that this notion means that this would be opening a "free-for-all" notion of research. Lather (2006:43) addresses this concern by asserting that in allowing uncomfortable shifts, social sciences should not fear that there will be as many paradigms as there are new researchers. Rather than being in "stuck places", research teaching situates the known theories and methods so that the marginalised can "be left to work [from a point of departure], within, against and across traditions".

6.5 Roles and relationships

This study found that there is a complicated dynamic which exists in relationships in higher education in South Africa. I found through this study that sense of belonging can be skewed by perceptions of events. I feel that being welcomed by any group was a tenuous merger between me and the social group. Being welcomed by a similar group does not automatically give one access to another seemingly similar group. HBUs, as evidenced in this study, seem to have more Black women feeling like they belong in HEIs, that they can achieve, expand and share their knowledge. The study also shows, however, that this respect garnered by these women is not as transferable to HWUs.

Feelings of belonging is vital to being a successful member in a social and political identity. Addressing the issues of gender, race and social class faced by Black women in higher education positions is exacerbated by Apartheid mentalities of white and Black persons. I acknowledge and am excited by the Black women academics who have reached and accessed the highest enclaves of these institutions and their narratives are diverse and

interesting. For too many, however, who are able to have this success in sight, within reach, accessing beyond, what I call a marble ceiling for Black women, is an idealistic goal. There is an implicit knowledge of access to which we are not privy, for reasons which are difficult to formulate and thus unlikely to be addressed. The inherent knowledge, or lack thereof, the gendered and racial roles we automatically take on, are not the fault of anyone who finds themselves in the institutions as the current structures and the cultures had been formulated centuries before. However, I propose that what should be rectified is the manner in which society goes about correcting the disparities caused by our embedded notions.

There exists a pervasive overarching culture in HEIs which is suited to white and male prominence which maintains Black women's role in junior and mid-career positions in higher education. There is a direct correlation between white male success and the fact that higher education was designed by and for white men. The argument developed in this thesis is not that there are no Black women in top senior positions. The argument is that the numbers have stagnated at the lowest level of representation for over 30 years even though policies have been amended in line with the constitution of the country. Globally, this is the same, however, South Africa is one of the few African countries with a high success rate of academic achievement. South Africa has of the top-ranked universities yet it fails to deliver on the promises to reach the most socially, economically and educationally marginalised people. South Africa should set an example in the international arena because Africa is the origin of African women and if we cannot flourish here, how can we expect to do so in other parts of the world.

The processes more recently, after apparent redress, has benefitted the advancement of white women, and somewhat further behind, of Black men. The equity policies promise to advance the creation of equity in our institutions. Unfortunately, there is little acknowledgement that the hierarchy is also supported within the design of equity policies of institutions in South Africa by failing to acknowledge these policies address only the specific needs of equity which allows only the next in line, that is white women, to move up. Instead of starting to, or favouring, redress the issues of institutional inequity with those who had been most marginalised, and not with everyone who had been somewhat marginalised, the problems of attaining redress are shifted in the same direction as before.

6.6 Learning from opening up the past

> *Conflation is a useful but inadequate sociological shorthand for South Africa. The most critical omission is that of racism as a deep structural cultural reality with its durable psycho-social effects on the South African poverty landscape… One could make exactly this argument for the concept of gender (sexism) and the complex of patriarchy in which it is set. (Soudien, 2013:8)*

Class, intelligence and other references to social standing did not pass the attention of any of the participants in this study. The type of inquiry followed allowed for the expression of what we unwittingly felt about our positionality in the world and how this was carried throughout our trajectories. However, whatever messaging we had received as children about being second-class citizens and not belonging in certain domains, did not prevent us from challenging the status of HEIs. We all tended to alter the knowledge which had been given to us by society about where Black girls should or should not venture. This study showed that each of us made the guided choice of reviewing who we were, where we belonged and how we interacted.

I used to feel proud that I must have been brighter than the other children in Hanover Park. At the age of 42 years, I wrote my narrative and recognised all of the advantages I have been afforded over my peers. These advantages added up to more than they meant as single entities. I had developed a love of reading because my mother loved reading and set the example. My mother was a single parent and set the example of being independent. We had a car which meant that we could leave Hanover Park for short periods of time, but this showed us a view beyond the confines of the ugliness of the township most were forced to remain in day after day.

Our teachers, our parents and our relatives showed us much of what we had been denied, not with the intention of showing us where we belong but to what we could aspire. This led to us learning about our positionality and not to have inferior frames of mind, as was intended. This did not mean, however, that we were rid of all of the complexes of belonging or not. It also did not necessarily change other people's perceptions of us. Becoming aware of the intended influences on our social status was a gradual process because there were factors which protected us in this study from seeing ourselves as worth-less. Success in academia does not come from a single person's tenacity. There are limitations to how far desire and access can take one.

The time I had between writing my story and analysing it, has allowed me to shift my gaze of writing from a child's perspective to see the constraints and enablers I had identified in my initial writing in a different light. This seemed to have occurred for the other participants as well. By the time we had completed our formal education to enter positions in HEIs, we had developed a strong enough sense of self to acknowledge short-comings and what was required to succeed despite all the external constraints.

In our current contexts we bear the burden of proof every day despite having achieved before. We are not prepared for the constant battle to reach the goal posts determined by cultures which do not appreciate the vast differentials between, which do not perceive us as having cultural capital because it is not the appreciated capital.
The argument is that "but what about those Black women who have achieved the highest level?" I am not indicating that it does not happen. Research shows us that even these women have struggled to get there and that they perceive that it a struggle remain there with the "burden of proof". Institutions must acknowledge that the space is limited for Black women. I am saying that white men and, since the calls for equity on institutions, white women must be perceived as more competent because they are surpassing Black men who surpass Black women.

I make no assumptions about the fact that none of the participants spoke about sexual or any other kind of abuse growing up. It may be that there was nothing to tell. Also, we hardly knew each other and I realise that for most there is a silence around such issues. The most negative aspect to come from writing my own story and listening to others', is the realisation that the struggle continues. Many young girls will continue to suffer and struggle because they may not know that there is a different "normal". It continues because we seldom hear the background stories of those who do succeed despite the constraints. It continues also because achieving despite the difficulties are celebrated and we are made out to seem heroic. For us being clever, dedicated, celebrated and placed on a pedestal does not mean an end to the race, gender and classist struggle for others. These reactions do not mean that the prospects for many Black girls have changed. They remain the most vulnerable in our societies.

> *How one creates a higher education experience which speaks to well-being, both material and psycho-social, is the challenge before us. (Soudien, 2013:58)*

I use the same themes I used in the analysis of my own narrative. The scope of the analysis does not allow me to draw conclusions on every individual. I also explained at the outset that as a sample of Black women academics, we are not a homogenous group. Terre Blanche *et al.* (2006) explain that the researcher cannot make assumptions or draw conclusions about a group based on individual findings or vice versa. The commonalities in our narratives are, however, drawn from the space and time we shared within a specific political climate. Furthermore, I assume that that same political climate influenced and still influences the perceptions many people have of themselves and others. My research question is about the experiences of individuals, but I have had to first set the scene by explaining the challenges set by our common context. The stories told here are of Black girls who became Black women in academia against various odds. We managed to avoid "the double jeopardy" of poverty. Not being fluent in reading recycles the disadvantage narrative of the marginalised (Hernandez, 2011). Whatever our reasons, the women I interviewed had grabbed at, fallen into or been given an education as a means of achieving our positions. The narratives of how we came to accept the key influences to our educational trajectories are unique.

In writing my own narrative, previously unrecognised influences and management skills to turn constraints into enablers, came to the fore. For the participants, there were similar experiences in talking through their stories. All of them said that until relaying their narratives, they were not aware of their strengths and how events played a role on their pathways. The development towards an individual identity, a *coherent sense of self* and agency despite our social and structural confines, were aided by the seemingly insignificant. These people, challenges and events often gave us scope to move forward, building our resilience. For most of the participants interviewed, it was the first time that they had thought their own stories through and attempted to tell it in a structured manner.

"Rage is not enough"; intentional scholarship and frameworks need to be developed if issues affecting women of colour are to be adequately addressed (Denzin, 1992, 1977 cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The analysis of the coded interviews and drawings shifts the focus from my own internal interpretation influenced by my specific past experiences to "the narrative constructionist approach". The ways in which we continue to make it "through everyday life" is shown in the "threefold concern with cultural texts, lived experience, and the articulated relationship" in our social contexts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005:187). White men hold so much power to deter Black women from progressing. Their closest supporters

are those who gain most from their proximity – white women and Black men – while the Black woman remains in servitude to all. White men succeed because the conditions in contexts are designed for them to succeed. Their and others' expectations of them are delivered because they are unconsciously, unceremoniously and unintentionally supported for their roles as leaders. Our stories are related as part of an ever-incomplete whole, but they are by no means the same story. Our experiences may seem unrelated to those outside of the social fields but investigations such as these which draw together the narratives and then again deconstruct the experiences indicate that there exists a dynamic which is much more complicated between the Black woman and white and male in academia.

I argue that a cerebral conflict exists on the part of society about the role of Black women in academia, which is mostly the burden of the Black woman but for which she is the least accountable. The messaging received through a patriarchal education system growing up could have given us a sense of not belonging and dampened a sense of agency. If this were true, however, these few Black women could not have made it through high school, into university and proceed to postgraduate level.

Also, for most of the women interviewed for this study, our awareness of class and gender differences did not start during our formative years where we would most likely have been negatively affected by being treated as inferior. Most had families who believed in our potential and treated us as equal to brothers and other related males. Most had either supportive fathers or as in my case, a strong woman influence for independence and agency. Our families wanted and worked hard for their daughters to progress. In later years we all were included, involved and empowered by the struggle for equality, and we fought as equals alongside our Black brothers.

The preceding autobiographic account, *Shifting Sands,* is the story of growing up and being educated in society, school and university during the period of Apartheid Law. In brief, I was born in 1966, the same year that Apartheid Acts were written into law, I was two years short of 30 when it ended in 1994. I have been working on this thesis for six years. In these years from 2013 nothing much has shifted in terms of the number of Black women who have achieved academic success globally or in South Africa. It may be argued that to expect to see a shift over so few years is unrealistic. However, this unremarkable shift or the remarkable stasis, can be tracked as relatively static in the 26 years post-Apartheid. That we are "influenced by the lived and told narratives in which we are embedded" is apt to explain

that the notions of who we and others are, who belong and in what positions which keep these numbers low and static. All of the sixteen Black women whom I interviewed for this and the larger NRF project explained that their feelings of job and educational satisfaction depended on the type (PWI and PBI) of institution they were at, irrespective of their childhood cultural and school education. Our related interactions show that our pasts definitely influence our current interactions but it seems that our current interactions and/or reactions are far more influenced by the institutional and/or departmental culture than by our variant past experiences. Much of what is felt is difficult to verbalise as the language has not been properly formulated as yet. There is a visceral knowledge of feeling unwelcome in certain spaces which is easy to negate as being imaginary and intentions by others are equally as easily denied. I show here how the collective pasts as those belonging and those who never belonged are "influenced by the lived and told narratives in which we are embedded". I show how that white narrative and Black narrative are intertwined in this dance where we step on each other's' toes because of the narratives in which we remain "embedded" and invested. The glass ceiling fails to describe the difficulty which Black women encounter in academia. This embeddedness in our pasts is what creates a glass ceiling for white women and Black men but a ceiling of which is much more impenetrable for Black women.

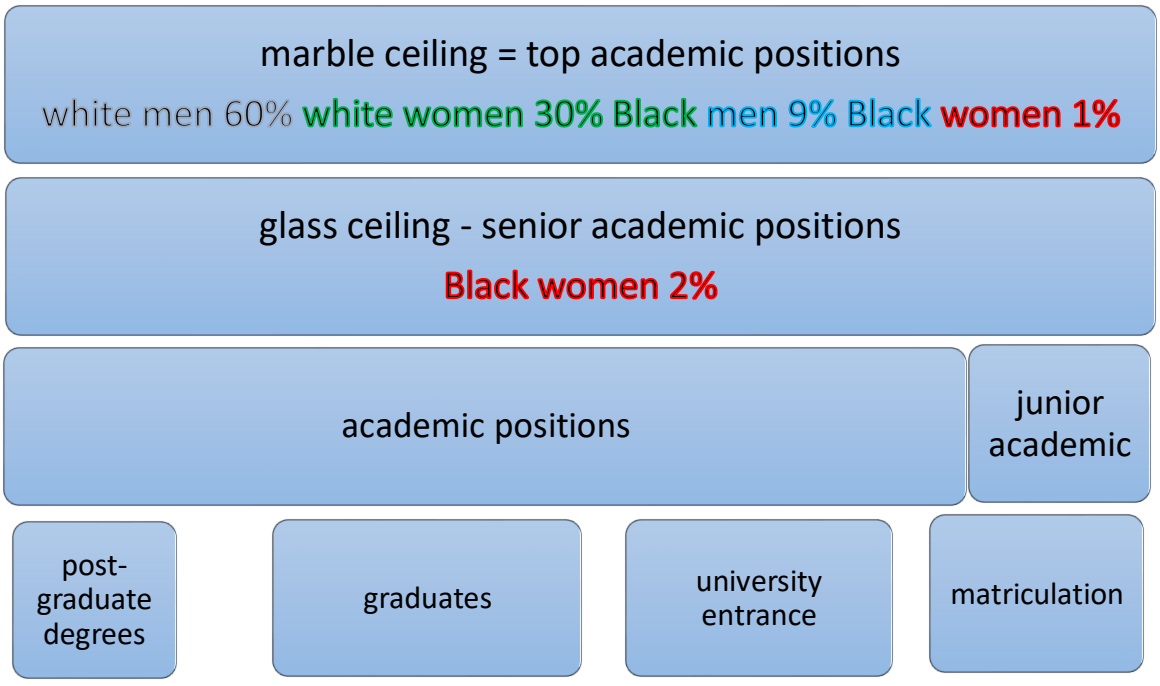


Figure 6.7.1: Fallacy of the glass ceiling

The result, as I have referenced in the beginning of my thesis, is that Black women remain under-represented in senior academic positions, especially at PWI. Despite the fact that they had to run a double-track to achieve the same starting positions as their white counterparts, forged their way through university postgraduate studies with less preparation, educationally and socially, to do so, there is a holding back or being held back by a coagulation of attitudes and perceptions. The tacit messaging within institutions is very different for Black women compared to others. The thesis further shows the valid misgivings by researchers who are critical of the continued culture in certain institutions where women are not progressing. Furthermore the general practices and policies do little in light of progress and transformation for equity in HEIs. We need to be constantly reminded that institutions cannot go about bandying exclusive and restrictive methodologies and theoretical frameworks of and for success. Policies and practices need to be aligned with the vision and mission statements of institutions. Transformation and decolonisation should stop being associated with lowering of standards.

The women interviewed for this study expressed that working and studying at HWUs was more challenging, socially and mentally, to navigate than when they worked at HDUs. Women occupying mid and senior positions in HWU perceive their experiences as constraining. Sense of belonging and advancing at these institutions was difficult to achieve. The women expressed that they remained in positions, with fewer prospects of promotion. This translates to a perception of epistemic barriers, a type of violence, either holding them back or pushing them out.

As individuals, there are various, similar and different issues which impacted our trajectories to higher education positions as academics. The common thread we share is that we grew up and went to school under Apartheid and now work in post-Apartheid academia. Our narratives show the differences of the routes which led each individual to this point. We are all first-generation academics although some of us had had a middle-class upbringing. For some of us going to university was planned by our parents, for others not so.

The suppression of indigenous knowledges is not only practiced by ignoring and discarding what is African or Eastern knowledges. It occurs also by translating and then espousing where these knowledges are assumed or subsumed as Western or European. Placing this pseudo male-Euro-centric knowledge as the goal robs society, nationally and globally, of

the links and complexities which exist between our worlds. Once we start to acknowledge the role of "the other" cultures in "theoretical traditions" we can begin to rid ourselves of ideas of knowledgeable elites and current structural regulation. Sharing our ideas, narrating and writing our stories, is the start of building theoretical frameworks as they work in our immediate context. Documenting Black women's move towards both individual and collective consciousness, as with *Black Feminist Thought*, can be the proverbial pen in hand to "sketch out its contours" for socially just theories (Nathan and Scobell, 2012a).

6.7 Chapter summary

The chapter discussed how the societal and structural conditions imposed on Black women do not prepare her in the same way for competing in academia as it does others. Through this process I have learned that we are individual and that it would be blasé and disrespectful of others' experiences to think that "because I did, you can". The view that because one Black woman has achieved any success it should mean that any other Black woman can, does not recognise the intersectionality of individual personality, experiences and reactions. The effects of the stigmatisation of certain knowledges as less than what is dominant, does not recognise us as individual. Until we examine why we have reached or achieved certain things over others, we realise that our judgement by the standards which have become appreciated by society cannot be held as truth of ability. Acknowledging our enablers often requires more vulnerability than acknowledging our constraints. Constraints can be seen as acceptable excuses. Acknowledging our enablers would require an admission of having advantages over others.

The silenced focus and feelings on either side of the hierarchical divide leave unacknowledged and unaddressed notions untampered. By opening up spaces for ourselves to firstly examine and then share our narratives will allow for an examination of our perceptions of self and of others. This should be part of the framework for unpacking the issues which are responsible for Black women leaving institutions or not progressing to senior positions. There are layers of our perceptions of culture, self and others which is born with us. It is insipid in our families, our cultures and how we view ourselves, our position in the world in relation to others. We interact with the world in ways that are dependent. Our interactions become determinants of our trajectories but also the trajectories of those we interact with, because our perceptions and messaging carry a weight we may not recognise. For Black women to thus know how and why they experience domains in the

ways that we do, we need to know our past and the role it plays in our interplay in current contexts. Often, we can be holding ourselves back until we know our reactions and learn how to address others' reactions towards us, which are influenced by their perceptions of themselves and us. This is the first line in rewriting and redressing the historical notion that Black women do not belong and cannot achieve senior positions.

The Apartheid regime successfully kept people separate by delineation based on race and ethnicity. Appreciation of proximity to whiteness and offering resources accordingly serves to construct not only physical but also emotional barriers amongst people. This is an ideal political ploy which ensures power and leads to animosity about who belongs where. The Bernsteinian notion is correct that governments which divide people according to class and race find it is easier to control and oppress. People then tend more towards comparing themselves to the other causing oppression not only from the structures but also within and amongst cultures. Reflection is needed for us to relive, retell and thus reconsider the narratives we thought we had lived. Reflection can bring us to a realisation that things are different to what we thought, how we perceived and how we perceived we are perceived. Reflection opens a view of self that we realise that it is not the individual alone which determines success at whichever level. Most positive for me during the interviews (which often turned out to be short monologue sessions) are the times, as they spoke, that they seemed to have "Aha!" moments. Co-autoethnography encourages us to look beyond the redundant stories of poverty or struggle to see what strengths, our own and contextual, we have drawn on to overcome our circumstances. It allows us to take lessons from another's stories. There is an interplay which had been exposed. This interplay between individual and culture plays down upon us. The historical role of the Black women is set not only in our own minds as a victim-narrative. The perceptions which others have of us are more influential in the progress the Black woman is allowed to make.

Chapter Seven

Our histories stick to us like shadows, unacknowledged but present in our decisions and actions. It was only upon the reflection which came about with my writing that I began to understand certain things about myself. The connections between my past and decisions I make in my current contexts. The need to improve the future is for us each to examine how we and others have been favoured and disfavoured by the structure and cultures. This should serve as a reminder to everyone who wishes for an integrated and equal society – Black women, Black men, white women and white men.

7.1 Introduction

Being Black in academia is exhausting and troubling and troublesome.

There remains a shocking absence of Black women in influential positions in higher education in South Africa despite the 30 years of rhetoric of transformation. A global, collective struggle should no longer be an excuse South Africa hides behind. In this thesis I have shown that in South Africa, as in Britain, "academic flight has become a rational response to institutional neglect" of Black women academics because "academia's self-productive power" of its structure and culture, and its denial that racism is produced within its visible and invisible walls (Arday & Mirza, 2018). South African universities should be leaders in the endeavour to create space for Black academics because we boast about being leading universities in Africa. Being in Africa, we attract of the highest number of Black post-graduates, offering possibly the most opportunities for promoting Black women academics. Yet, Black women are absent in senior positions or leave the institutions. The "transformed" institution *should* be in constant transition but the institution should also already be a space where race and gender no longer count against being a Black woman. Figure 4.2.2 on page 100 begs that with the issues which are highlighted in this thesis be addressed.

Now that the narrative has been told and analysed, what will we do about it?

How can we change the narrative of Black women and our institutions?

Firstly, there must be acknowledgement that certain academic institutions are not the welcoming spaces we pretend. The elite status of being white and male must be addressed. Being a Black woman, must take precedence for voicing and defining her space.

If the slow pace of change around Black women's issues is global, then, while our struggles are multiple with unique intersections, they are also collective. This should not be an issue South African institutions hide behind but should take the lead.

Autoethnography is a way of self-care but also a way of showing care for others. By being aware, behaviour can improve, agency be taken, and we can speak up and act toward transforming ourselves and institutions. Vulnerability can be a good thing if it exposes us to notions of effecting positive societal change.

White people should do the work on why they feel vulnerable and uncomfortable about their continued senior positions in our institutions. Unwitting blindness make people unaware of their racist, oppressive habits and practices and they think of themselves as nice and accepting.

Black women are triggered and hyper-vigilant to our own oppression. Past painful experiences tend to affect awareness of similar occurrences while past pleasurable experiences may merely make us feel that this is the norm and that we are entitled to favour.

Sexism, classism and racism are ingrained, and acknowledging that it needs to change in order to change our society begins with taking onus of our complicity.

More should be done than only encouraging Black women to be courageous and continue fighting for their fight to be noticed. Being overlooked, degraded and insulted by ignorance should not be an excusable violation against the advancement of Black women (Mabokela, 2000; Winkle-Wagner, 2015; Davis & Maldonado, 2015).

Apartheid "residuals" impact on the success rates of Black people in academia (Badat, 2010; Liccardo & Botsis, 2015; Kang'ethe & Chivanga, 2016). This is not due only to their lacking a sense of belonging and valuable cultural capital, but also to white people's ignorance and denial of their many enablers. The gaps are recognisable with conscious reflection on the part of everyone in our educational institutions. Black women, Black men and white people's perceptions of their historical past as advantaged or disadvantaged and the role it plays in the present is pivotal to realising that sense of identity plays directly into sense of agency, identity and positionality (Riach, 2017).

In this thesis I highlight my view of reality and its influence on my ideology. My current context is a white-dominated academic space where I think that I am sometimes perceived as "unnecessarily troublesome" while I view myself as "troublesome" but necessarily so. It

is a context that I view as my own although I do not feel that I necessarily fit into all spaces. I justify my stance as oppositional and acknowledge that others' positionalities are also determined by their experiences. I believe that truth hovers, separate and suspended in the centre, an external entity, while reality is an individual reception of the world. This understanding helps me to understand my counterparts, but the challenge is accepting that the absence of Black women academics is constructively ignored and often warranted within academia.

These challenges cannot be resolved in my thesis. In the following three chapters, I describe and discuss the issues from a perspective and, finally, I soothe my interest in offering a limited expression of a partial resolution. The goal with this expression is to find effective mechanisms to traverse and insist on negotiating our space in academia. Through the analysis, I aim to extricate whether there exists a shared metanarrative for Black women academics in SAHEIs – are there themes that weave throughout our stories from which others can learn to transform our thinking, interactions and institutions?

What social justice may look like for Black women academics (Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010; Roxå, 2015) is not definitive, but it is my constructivist qualitative interpretation on one end of the scale. This is a critical intersectional feminist critique, inviting any oppositional debate within other frameworks. Being aware of the critique against standpoint theory, my study is co-constructivist, including my and the participants' intra- and-interpersonal dialogues. The interpretation of my own data as researcher and the participants' is woven into this analysis to create a view of an intricate root system which is seemingly without pattern. Co-narrative research necessarily integrates opposing, diverse and shared understandings in order to untangle and make meaning of our world on "personal", "interpersonal", and ideological" levels (Stephens, 2013).

Commonality of experiences and structures under which we had been educated and socialised did not mean that we shared perceptions. Critique of the values, culture and discourse we were, and are, exposed to was not necessarily shared by my participants and this took me by surprise. I had again thought that there would be a shared notion of politics amongst academics of a certain age. One example was something as simple as the idea of what is a presentable manner of wearing one's hair. An example is that all except one other "coloured" participant chemically straighten their hair. I have no issue with this except for the fact that I wear my hair natural and they commented that they always keep their own

hair tidy and presentable. I would not have commented on them straightening their hair because I know that this is a sensitive issue amongst "coloured" women.

I deal with marking my view of reality and its influence on my ideology in a white and academic space as "troublesome" and "inferior" in a context not considered as my own. I can justify my stance, albeit "oppositional", and acknowledge the others' individual positionality, determined by their experiences. I believe that truth hovers, separate and suspended in the centre, an external entity. While this understanding allows me to understand my counterparts, the challenge for me is accepting that the conspicuousness of the absence of Black women academics is ignored or even warranted by academia. This, however, is not something I can solve in my thesis. I soothe my interest in describing what I perceive and offer a limited expression to my participants towards understanding the world for ourselves. The goal with this expression is to find effective mechanisms to traverse and insist on navigating and negotiating our space in academia.

Through the analysis, I aim to extricate whether there exists a shared metanarrative for this group of Black women academics – is there a theme or a thread that weaves throughout our stories?

The hard to describe issues of gender, race and what social justice should be for Black women academics (Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010; Roxå, 2015) is my interpretation. Mine is a critical intersectional feminist critique, inviting oppositional debate which may be framed differently. Being aware of the critique against standpoint theory, my study is co-constructivist including my and the participants' intra- and-interpersonal dialogues. The interpretation of my own data as researcher and the participants' are woven into this analysis to create a view of an intricate root system which is seemingly without pattern. Narrative research necessarily integrates opposing, diverse and shared understandings in order to untangle and make meaning of our world on "personal", "interpersonal", and ideological" levels (Stephens, 2013).

Historical legacies weigh heavily, both positively and negatively, on accessible resources and institutional cultures – all affecting Black women. A context overview of South African HEIs is offered in earlier chapters as well as references about what it is like to enter certain institutions (Cooper, 2015; Leibowitz, Wisker *et al.*, 2015; Carolissen & Bozalek, 2017). Context analysis is an imperative of (auto)ethnographic studies as the conditions within institutions affect individual experiences. Being contextually sensitive to the vastly different

universities in South Africa, often within a few kilometres of each other, is necessary for understanding just how complex the intersection of factors influencing experiences and perceptions can be. The theoretical framework of this thesis is comprised on the critical social and race theories as well as the intersectional feminist theory. These frameworks allow me to critique and adjust my gazes of issues affecting Black women's experiences and activities in education. I critically explore the ways in which structurally and culturally supported white and male domination have and continues to affect the educational trajectories of Black women. For Black women to realise that we are agentic players in our narratives, we need to open dialogue with the "others" in our communities (Nathan and Scobell, 2012a). This, however, cannot be realised until we write down or find a way to express our realities. For most people who do not have embodied experiences of racism and sexism, these are merely intellectual concepts confined to their frames of non-experience. This thesis hopes to bring the reality of the intersectionality of issues affecting Black, working-class women to bare.

Instead of investigating what Black women need to do to fit in, in domains where they are not typically expected, and further than offering them support to fit in HE contexts, institutions are in need of a paradigm shift. The necessary shift from creating a welcoming and accommodating culture to being deconstructed and re-formed. Accepting critical social theory, specifically race and intersectional feminism, has been challenging in white and male dominated spaces. Angela Davis reflects on how white feminism considers intersectional feminism as concentrating too much on race and class because these do not centre on white feminist concerns. What white feminism fails to recognise is that under the intersectional feminist banner, even their concerns are addressed but they are not the only concerns. This stance makes it possible to interrogate inclusively the embodied experiences of those who have not typically been considered as belonging in a space other than as dominated objects of service (hooks, 1989).

The issues affecting Black women are not obvious to those comfortable in their centred positions, i.e., white and male people. One dimensional frame which works for those who belong is not suitable for use by those who do not belong. Applying frames of "welcoming others", on the other hand, does not suit us "others" either. Building theoretical frames or shifting existing frames become a must. Selling these new or developing frameworks to those "welcoming" us, is an added challenge for those of a different class, gender and race.

As Black feminists we need to reposition ourselves while remaining sensitive to the fact that this would necessarily uncomfortably reposition the other.

In discrimination of people on the basis of race, class, gender and sexual orientation also within higher education structures, Black women are the most objectified other. Yet intersectional feminism is not aimed at the foremost consideration of oneself, but rather social justice for all. Before this can be done, however, it is necessary to firstly be able to define their own reality, establish their "own identities", "unpack buried and forgotten history" (hooks, 2013:82, 53).

Feminism is concerned with reversing the status quo to offer equal opportunities to women but place white and Black women on an equal footing. This is called white feminism because it fails to recognise that Black women confront multiple intersections of oppression, being on the bottom rung of the hierarchy. Intersectional feminism, which is inclusive of anyone who is oppressed, makes white feminism unnecessary because of its inclusivity. Black women experience the most discrimination in all sectors of society. They are on the lowest rung of educationally, economically, and should justifiably be foremost in considerations towards equity.

7.2 Key points regarding the embedded mechanisms

> *Stay in the system, no matter how hard it is… "It's not going to be comfortable and not everyone will like it…but we've got to stay put because the work we are doing is important. – Mamokgethi Phakeng, VC UCT (Swingler, 2019)*

The invitation above by Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng could be interpreted as if for Black women to remain victims of society. It may seem to normalise the struggle when institutions should be doing the hard work to interrogate ways to stop failing Black women. The HE cultures in which we operate are most often what inform our behaviour but also our feelings of imposter syndrome when we do not have a sense of belonging in academic communities. Human beings often assimilate when they do not possess the required cultural capital to be deemed acceptable. This false sense of belonging can be exhausting to bear. Assimilating and carrying on with the job does not mean that we are true to who we are or that we feel a true sense of belonging. The "cultural texts" may in fact offer entire communities a false sense of belonging and acceptance. The realisation is that it takes so much effort as to cause internal stress for individuals of the minority or the marginalised.

A shift of gaze is needed for us to change the status quo. White people, especially those in historically white institution, need to recognise their role in the tardy change in society and our institutions.

In this thesis (Chapter 5), we got snippets of discriminatory practices experienced by all the interviewees in our institutions. The mechanisms of racism and whiteness remain embedded in ourselves as well as the institutions because we are too careful around sensitivities of white people to keep our relationships amenable. The interviews also indicated differences in racism and whiteness in HAUs compared to HDUs. White people and men seem to take more of a backseat in HDUs and Black women seem to have more agency and sense of belonging in these environments. The statistical and official data collected on the background and racial makeup of the HE institutions in which the women were located could be interrogated more fully. This thesis does not have room to investigate this.

7.3 Contributions to theory

The notion of 'enablers and constraints' is core to the originality of the thesis argument. It seems that irrespective of whether Black parents and communities try their utmost to provide enablers and the level of agency and intelligence Black women possess, statistically, too few of them progress compared to white counterparts. This thesis indicates that much more research, not possible in this thesis, is required in relation to transformational polices of 'inclusion and empowerment' in post-Apartheid South Africa (Chapter 2 and Chapter 6). A further need is the self-education of white people on their fragility around these topics. When I raise these ideas, I often get requests to explain, to be patient, to be polite and considerate of white people's feelings. There is a need to move beyond that point and can only do this when people are willing to educate themselves that although they may too have struggled in the past and work hard in the present, it is not comparable to what Black women go through daily. Autobiography has a place in illuminating the personal struggles and barriers Black women face in South Africa but also for white people to learn about themselves by comparison.

The thesis can connect us to the bigger political picture as well and further interrogation of the legacy of Apartheid which reman entrenched in the South African geography, history, institutional structures, families, and social worlds of its peoples.

The aim is to lead to understanding the longer journey ahead for access, recognition and promotion of Black women in academia in South Africa. This study offers contributions to narrative frameworks in Intersectional feminist work. The study shows some of the intersectional factors affecting Black women throughout their trajectories. Moreover, it offers a means to

elicit, through narrative, identifying factors which constrain Black women and how they can use their agency in identifying the strengths within themselves.

More importantly, this study further shows that it is at the nexus of being Black, woman and the desire to be an academic that certain constraints in institutions are encountered despite all the enablers Black women have on their side. The thesis invites institutions to prove how these could possibly be countered. Black women, irrespective of the resilience, require more strength, stronger sense of agency or support than she had developed in her childhood. She requires communities of support within the structure and culture of the HEIs to change. Unfair advantage accepted but sadly, denied or ignored, by many white people must be acknowledged as being socially unjust.

The entire system of employment equity needs to be redressed as it serves Black women the least, just as it has in the past. Sense of belonging must be theoretically framed within personal experience, institutional culture as well as in our close workgroup spaces. Ongoing investigations and radical open discussions are ways to track more Black women into academia and also the reassurance that equal scope exists.

A significant part of the framework for addressing Black women's continued under-representations is to include an investigation of the culture, not only from the perspective of institutional policies but also from the perspective of the people with whom she interacts.

Personal professional goals are incorporated into our work agreements but there is a lack of addressing the pertinent issues which influence our sense of inclusion and belonging and achievement. There is a shying away from the sexism and racism which underlie our work cultures.

Due to the limited scope of the thesis, focusing on these individual narratives does not do justice to our stories, yet it is an essential part of opening a space which makes this study meaningful in three ways:

i) Our narratives of childhood educational experiences give indications of what helped develop each one's sense of agency, whether it was cheered on or stifled. It should give a sense of relatedness, or not, of our past educational experiences to the interplay in our current contexts;
ii) The similarities give credence to what I remember about growing up and being educated in a patriarchal system as well as all the enablers I possessed;
iii) The differences test the notion of homogeneity amongst Black women academics which, it is argued, should then play out in our interactions and impact the success of Black women in the post-Apartheid academic world.

iv) The similarities in our experiences at HAUs (white) and HDUs (black) show that Black women are further disadvantaged, have feelings of doubt and lack support at HAUs - this needs exploration.

Both individual and institution should be counted as the enabling and constraining factors. The weighting of individual agency and institutional culture, however, is what should be further investigated. Black women who have showed considerable agency have achieved postgraduate studies and positions in academia despite the intersections of factors counting in their disfavour. Black women have passed against a myriad of odds. Black women have passed alongside white men, white women and Black men who have had more in their favour to achieve the same. Institutional culture halts many Black women at a specially fashioned marble ceiling as a deterrent. If Black women are so determined in their desire for education and an academic reputation that they have overcome the odds, as described in the data, then it is the institution which is not caring enough, not supportive of normalising Black women in the institutions.

As much as Black women need to reflect on their interplay at the level of work groups and at institutional level, institutional management owes it to the wider academe, and the rest of society, to investigate the possibility of a culture which is exclusionary of Black women to a particular level of achievement.

The need for narratives to be shared in an academic space has been informally expressed to me more times that I can count. When people hear of my topic of research, most interest is shown by women, Black and white. White women often ask why I have not extended this research to include them. My response is always that I am sure that their narratives need to be shared but for me to have concentrated only on gender issues would have broadened it to an extent where I have no experience. My response to Black women is that they should record their stories as a start towards the normalisation of Black women in top level institutional spaces. Spaces should be created so that there are opportunities for experiences and perceptions. These interventions should be both formal as research and informally as discussion groups.

The aims of CRT are represented in these adapted questions posed by Sue (2015), which justify my observations from this study:

Is life as hard as this Black woman describes?
Is she exaggerating or misreading the action of others?

Is she oversensitive or paranoid?

Is she right in concluding that others don't want to listen to her explanations?

Why is she so angry and resentful?

Do you believe her?

In a study of racial and educational segregation, Matsuda *et al.* (1993), referenced by Dixson and Rosseau (2005:9), offer the unifying themes of CRT. CRT and Intersectional Feminism frame this study because twenty-seven years later, South Africa academia as well as broader society has not shifted significantly. The recommendations from this research is for institutions to:

1. Recognise racism as "endemic" to South African life and HEIs ;
2. Exercise caution when dominant culture continues to use terms such as neutrality, objectivity and colour-blindness as these are recognised as excuses for continued racism;
3. Challenge the reality that history is told and often defended from the dominant viewpoint and "that racism has contributed to all contemporary manifestations" of one group's advantage over the disadvantage of another;
4. Value "experiential knowledge of people of colour and communities" in analysing law and society;
5. Include attributes of non-racism and multiple gender inclusionary practices at "interdisciplinary" and cross-disciplinary levels;
6. Work purposefully with external intervention programmes towards ending all forms of oppression.

In their article, Dixson and Rosseau outline some of the important published works where CRT is used as a framework for educational research.

This is my claim: that normalising Black women in positions of power goes against the culture of academic institutions but also the rest of society in South Africa. The underlying principle is that qualitative data on Black women in academia is not going to be accessed if no-one is interviewing them while they are researching in fields other than autoethnography of experiences of racism and sexism in institutions.

Examining qualitative data offer opportunities for managers to realise the failure of changing policy to address people's perceptions. The critique levelled at the Soudien *et al.* (2008) report on university staff experiences as "anti performance and anti scientific" because it had taken a "confessional route" is an indication of an all too common unappreciative stance in academia towards "personal stories" as methodology (Govinder *et al.*, 2013). The undervaluing of the individual narrative is one way of negating experiences

and perceptions as mere tales which hold no value as actual data and can thus not be admitted as record of lack of transformation within institutions. The critique mocks that 20 out of 20 000 (Govinder *et al.*, 2013) reporting on racism is negligible. I assert that if Black academics are minimal, say 40 out of 20 000, then the number saying that they have experienced racial and gender discrimination is hardly as "negligible" as argued. Furthermore, one person's experience of inequality amongst many remains as relevant as ten. In-depth "confessional" investigations may lead to deeper understanding of how perceptions are developed and how to change them. So, if 20 people are experiencing racism and 10 of the same people are also experiencing sexism, understanding their past experiences can lead to indicators of how to manage these experiences or perceptions.

We need a more inclusive frame of reference. We need to equalise for all, irrespective of race, gender and class. Yet I know that the answers are not simplistic. Engaging critically with my success and the limitations of my success, I have had to acknowledge three important factors: the socio-political challenges (being raised and educated under Apartheid as a "coloured" girl); the enablers I had over other people of colour (my mother loved to read); my personal role in my failure to achieve everything I wanted (feeling debilitated by hopelessness in certain responsibility areas).

As a PhD candidate, I do not attend class, but we have a support group of PhD candidates. We have been meeting as a changing-group (members come and go) for over five years. For my Master's degree, I had three contact sessions where the eight students registered for the course would get together with lecturers to discuss research methodology and theoretical frameworks. The way in which I attended school, habitually, did not prepare me for this method of learning. Gradually, from undergraduate to postgraduate, higher education prepares us for the system desired by the time we are at PhD level – to work solo. I find that this demands of me to "develop" and change to something different to my nature as a highly social being; quite taxing (Carter *et al.*, 2012; Van Schalkwyk, 2012b; McKenna, 2016). I become motivated each time I am able to talk about my research, whether formally or informally.

Our thinking is influenced by the political atmosphere of where we learned how to be in the world. If change is desired there has to be an acknowledgement that we are socio-political products from birth and that change is difficult. Mezirow's framework (Lundgren & Poell, 2016) could be the basis for individual and societal change. For transformation and

transformative learning to take place in our institutions, mind-sets of the dominant as well as the non-dominant have to change. Ideally what is required for transformative thinking to take place in a specific zone is the "disorienting dilemma". This would mean that a tragic or momentous event needs to occur in that particular zone where change is required, but that likelihood is rare. Therefore we need to deliberately create challenges to the extent of causing discomfort at the levels where the desired change is required. Our own behaviours are only changed by our deliberate focus on our convictions. Change comes with critically engaging the reasons we think and act as we do. Prejudices and discriminatory practices have to be essentialised as reasons for certain phenomenon, such as the low representation rate of Black women academics in senior positions. Importantly, our own sense of identity, and thus the roles we play, should be investigated for the ways in which we contribute to such social and cultural practices.

The aim of this study is to cause sufficient discomfort in foregrounding and exposing others to the plight of the Black girl and the Black woman in educational institutions. I hope that the realisation is that we share responsibility for perpetuating her struggle. Unless we actively address the issues we are guilty of wilfully holding back transformation. Inequality and inequity in education should be a top global, national, institutional and individual priority (Jimmy Volminck, 2018 – Dean of Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Stellenbosch University, addressing new lecturers).

In the section of my autobiography about laying a criminal charge against the person who abused me as a child, I recall not only what the perpetrator did to influence my trajectory and interactions in the educational context, but also the judge's depth of understanding of influential factors when he said: "Imagine what she could have become if you (the rapist) had let her be".

I also liked the instruments of drawing and play used by the courts to collect the narratives of abused children. I wondered later whether these instruments help even adults overcome communication barriers.

For me the solution lies not in rewriting policies towards progressive institutions, but in allowing Black women to take place without unnecessary assimilation. We should address changing institutional cultures by challenging our own mindsets.

Looking back at my own experiences and how many Black students still sit in discomfort, I am amazed at the hunger for learning with which we all enter school and university. Black students are still willing to cram into such classes.

7.4 Limitations

The first limitation is the small sample of participants and institutions used in the study. The experiences of so few participants from each institution are not representative of the entire institution, all similar institutions, its faculties or departments and work groups.

Individuals work with, and come in contact with, limited number of staff in work groups and students in lectures. This can thus not effectively describe the culture of the whole context. This raises the same concern of Black women being seen as a homogenous group. Departments and faculties in institutions are not the same from one institution to the next. The intention was not to select participants as representatives of the institutions, but rather to portray their perceptions of a culture and the interplay.

The study focused mostly on the educational trajectories of the participants which limited the perceptions of the effects of other influencers on interplay of personality, such as nature versus nature, personality traits and other trauma.

As the researcher I did not use structured questions for the participants. This meant that different participants concentrated only on certain aspects of experiences which were pertinent to them at the time. Some participants felt particularly to concentrate on negatives and others on positives in their contexts. I did not control whether they decided to talk about only constraints or enablers in their context or childhood.

The final limitation I reflected on was the one-sided nature of the study. There was no scope designed into the study for interviewing the employers, management, colleagues or students of the participants. Other than determining the intent and mission of the institutions from their policy documents, there was not an opportunity granted to interview the white counterparts of the participants.

7.5 Recommendations

This study highlights the possibility of inclusion of Black women to grow the academic profile of institutions. Not only does it offer means to address the remaining disparities, it also opens up scope for areas and methods of study. The study has to a limited extent shown that the continued unjust society which disadvantages Black girls from birth, will continue

for many decades. It is safe to say that just as some Black girls have come through these conditions, more of us will continue to advance despite these conditions. The appeal here is for institutions to open the spaces for Black women, and not to hold the successful Black women as trophies to the institutions as though we are products of the institution rather than of our hard-won degrees.

Academic progress is often viewed as solo projects. The participants in this study have indicated that mentorship is appreciated. Collaborative work can be encouraged for the beginning stages of Black women academics which sets them on a path of achievement.

Recognising Black women academics as knowledgeable of other Black women, institutions could encourage support groups for Black women who are aiming to complete postgraduate studies or management courses.

More research is needed in the area of autoethnographic and autobiographic writing. Staff should be encouraged to get to know their perceptions of self and other and to recognise their prejudices.

The study highlights the opportunity to have uncomfortable conversations. Opportunities for guided discussions regarding gender and race and an elimination of notions of colour-blindness should be opened up. Most Black women would prefer others not to be blind to their gender or their race. This does not serve to recognise that we have been, and still are, the most marginalised in society.

1. All staff have the individual task of writing up their educational enablers and constraints from childhood to current context;
2. All staff partake in guided collective ethnographies about their current contexts;
3. White mentors for doctoral students and new staff should first develop an autoethnographic portfolio;
4. A defined mentorship initiative specifically for Black women PhD candidates and new academic staff;
5. Mentors to work alongside new or developing academics on their trajectories who are responsive to the context of South Africa, where Black women make up more than 50% of the population and Black girls are of the least likely to complete their education;
6. Strongly encourage collaborative research, nationally and internationally, because advancement of Black women is also a global issue;
7. A training programme for management and senior academics and work groups to work with academic staff with one of the specific aims being to increase the sense of belonging;
8. Intercultural training or facilities for staff engagement and collaboration;
9. Encourage ongoing reflective practices for all staff to build personal and professional identities.

> *As each person's experience unfolded over time, we were attentive to temporal unfoldings. We were, at the same time, attentive to the personal, that is, to the interaction of the personal and social, embodied in the person. And we were attentive to the interactions of the embodied person with the social, that is, to the social, cultural, institutional narratives and to the minute-by-minute particularities of ongoing events. We also attended to the places where lives were composed, lived, and relived. Increasingly we became attentive to the ways that language shaped the social, cultural, and institutional narratives and how those narratives, in turn, shaped the individual person. The stories we live and tell are profoundly influenced by the lived and told narratives in which we are embedded.*
> *(Clandinin et al., 2006:1)*

Every person, Black and white, woman and man, has a story which can be written in honesty. A story where we process our privileges and struggles and then compare these to recognise the other. As a Black woman, I find that certain political conversations are uncomfortable with white people, causing me to clash, not always intentionally but always to, try peacefully, achieve equity. In this way, I do not belong, as I have at my previous institution. I also often feel uncomfortable in creating uncomfortable conditions. My ideas of transformation tend to be in opposition to others in my current institution (O'Farrell & Farrell, 2013:87). Comment on my experiences of racial prejudice, inequality and influence of past injustices on current practices are seldom favourably or even critically engaged with, as too easily white-guilt/defence/denial take precedence. I am often countered with arguments that I managed to get this far which makes it a challenge to explain that this is despite, not because of the education I had received. Dlamini (2010) makes the point that Bantu Education has not always had the desired effect of breaking the spirit of agency of Black people. Soudien (2013) however, points out that most Black South Africans remain intellectually and economically constrained due to the past educational and structural marginalisation, and that further research into the effects of disadvantage has had on self-esteem and psycho-social issues is warranted.

Being aware at an early age of class differences and feeling insecure in my home and community by constant threats of physical, verbal and emotional violence impacted my life. The impacts of the invisible violence of Apartheid are something I only later came to recognise. All of this formed my context growing up and I questioned and aimed to

transcend the outcome which had been planned and expected for me. Racial identity has obviously had a significant effect on relations in South Africa, whether one acknowledges it or not (Seekings, 2008; Bray, Gooskens, Moses, Khan & Seekings, 2011). Crain Soudien expands on how the Apartheid government set out their plans to limit according to class and race in "What to teach the Natives" (Soudien 2010, cited in Pinar – Curriculum studies in SA, 2015). Soudien (2010) states that, historically, the educational curriculum in South Africa was to keep social classes and races separate through structural and thus cultural violence. The exclusionary practices were aimed at limiting the academic success of people of colour, and by implication, all other means of social viability. Access to narratives of strength and struggle helped me on my way beyond the walls constructed to hold me back. I often compared my own story to the stories I read: *mine is different here and here but it is similar there and there.* This research aims to investigate the academic foundations of other women of colour and compare them to mine. *This is where my push and drive came from. And yours?* The logic for this autoethnographic study taking on a further element to identify the various powers from their past and present that women of colour draw upon to navigate and negotiate their way to academic success, is that there is no recipe for WOC to succeed in academia. There exists a need, however, for various stories to be told so as to investigate the structures which support or hinder WOC, which are different to what matters to other academics. The study is necessary, relevant and unique as it draws on what we almost only subconsciously (almost all the women who drew and then spoke said they had not previously thought about the things they spoke of) recognise from our past, our identity, fate, society and context as support or constraints.

My and other stories, crisscrossing educational cultures and society during and post-Apartheid, have dictated drawing on these connections of marginalisation and over-stepping boundaries set up for Black women in academia in South Africa (Mabokela, 2002; Jansen, 2016). The boundaries imposed, as expressed by Soudien, while growing up have impacted our perceptions in our current contexts. Through narrative we tell of journeying between the structural and cultural privileges within educational cultures and society. There are links between childhood histories and future actions in higher education. These perceptions developed about PoC and especially WoC influence our ultimate performance at HEIs (Leibowitz, Swart, Bozalek, Carolissen, Nicholls & Rohleder, 2013). According to Liebowitz and Soudien, the "native" was not to be educated to such a level that they could move out of their contextual constraints of race and class. This was ensured, and really

successful for most, by higher teacher/learner ratios and racially separate teacher qualification colleges and universities.

The historical background of South Africa and higher education in South Africa is as much a part of the context for this study as where and how we grew up as a racially segregated society. South African universities and its academics are still faced with the existent miscalculations of inequalities and misunderstandings of privilege affected by our Apartheid past. Historical legacies mean that institutional cultures are too slow-changing despite the adapted policies geared towards equity and change (Soudien). An overview of the literature about Black women in the past and current contexts and how this relates to the valid debates and unanswered questions is given here (Mabokela; Yuval-Davis). So this research takes a critical look at the current, apparently equalised state of higher education and the experiences for Black women academics. The research further investigated what in fact these women need to "Get over" and what "the race card" is that we are still continually accused of playing from the Apartheid "past". Our perceptions analysed for clarity of experiences as we forge our pathways in higher education spaces are especially relevant in the current movement towards the decolonisation of higher education.

The manner in which individuals can identify, transform constraints and employ enabling factors to make their way through the world, has become my prime awareness. This is not only for Black women to do. Everyone should be offered an opportunity, take an opportunity, to examine and explore the self. Standpoint theory is a useful starting point to examine our culture, politics and the ways in which we allow a transformed society to remain a pipe dream for some, while others lavish in the status quo.

Ultimately, the relative invisibility of white normativity creates the illusion that white subject matter is universal and universally interesting. Ironically, scholars who locate the genesis of mesearch in the work of people of colour would do well to adopt a technique forwarded by Black feminists: reflexivity. As Patricia Hill Collins argues, all researchers, regardless of background, should be aware of and open to how their social position or personal biography might influence their assumptions.

I am still unsure of all the ways in which the events of Apartheid have influenced me on my trajectory as a Black woman coming to academia. It remains a trial to explain the ways in which particular interactions at institutional level currently influence my trajectory. In both cases it seems easier to identify the obvious structural effects, while the cultural and

attitudinal impact is much harder to identify and address. Certain attitudinal influences, both positive and negative, are much easier to identify. In some instances, both can reside in a single unit. It is these things which are hard to describe which make it so hard to overcome. An example of this may be a senior person who agrees that it is great that I am pursuing a PhD but does not see that it took so much more for me to get to this level of academia than for him. Another example is from one of the cameos who was invited to meetings but was always second-guessed when she made inputs. While another person in these meetings told her that she only felt that way but that is not necessarily how other people intended it. The response she received was: "Oh, we discuss everything before we make decisions." She felt that the majority of the time only her comments were overlooked. Is it necessary to always deliver proof? It is not always possible to find the proof because by the time you have detected a pattern, the series of occurrences have passed. The problem to be addressed in this thesis is to determine and, if possible, identify a pattern of feelings/nuances experienced amongst a small number of Black women in academia to see whether there are common or different notions about the influences of our childhood education, and whether there are similar or different experiences in our current interactions as academics. Brah (1996, cited in Bhavnani, 2001:465) asks in a particular culture, "What are the presumed norms from which a group is marked as being different?" And "Who (then) defines difference?" More importantly, she asks, "How is difference interiorized in the landscapes of the psyche?" Our perceptions of events are dependent on our inner selves developed through past experiences. Whether those belonging to the dominant group try to tell us to feel differently and that we are more "welcome" than we imagine is not necessarily of any consequence to how we feel. To "welcome" someone is to say that this is your space and are at liberty to call someone in from the outside. Feeling different is entirely subjective as I may feel a more or lesser sense of belonging than another Black woman academic and more or lesser "othered" depending on the level on which I am interacting. We have been socialised to feel "othered" and I believe that dominant groups have been similarly socialised to feel "belonging" (Freire, 2001). As Black women academics, we are different structurally, culturally and individually. Our stories are contrary, emotional and "evocative". We feel different precisely because we have been silenced and our stories are not known.

A collective or individual sense of belonging and being "othered" may differ from one situation to another, depending on our proximity to structures or cultures. For this reason micro-, meso- and macro-level interactions are worthy of investigation when people are

marginalised within a dominant culture. Mere ethnographic observations of an institution may allow insight into micro-level interactions (Roxa, 2015), such as noting that certain race and gender dominate in certain domains such as top research and management positions. This influences the types of research, theoretical approaches and methodologies used. Feminist and race theory aim to deconstruct research paradigms. I feel that only through using empirical research data can we re-create or reconstruct research paradigms and theory for our own contexts.

Paradigms should be sufficiently fluid to accommodate not only differences in subjective perceptions of events but also how we identify within macro-, meso- and micro-contexts. The micro-level interactions are critical influential relationships towards individual and institutional disruption and progression. The give and take of influential factors should be acknowledged to how they "influence matters like belonging, identities and status" (Roxa, 2015:6). There are few "coherent" shared factors between individuals, but we can work within the pliable frame of common "themes" and "concepts". Where the aim is to deconstruct or re-create ways of opening and acquiring knowledge (Maynard, 1994:126, cited in Bhavnani, 2001), we should be prepared to work through radical means. These means include adapting or adopting different ways of theorising what often seems to be similar topical issues. For example, the same brand of post-modernist feminist theory stemming from white America cannot carelessly be assumed as generalised to anywhere on the globe. A paradigm design should be adaptable in its methods and tools to centre each time a differently marginalised identity. There should be "an interested, conscious thinking and rethinking of history and historicity, a rethinking which has women's autonomy and self-determination at its core" (Alexander & Mohanty, 1997, cited in Bhavnani, 2001, *Feminism and Race*). In South Africa, especially amongst the Black and mixed race communities, there is often a lack of all salient features for the Westernised notion of academic success, namely: "financial and material support, [acquaintance with academic literacy] prior education, cultural capital, and aspects of identity". How then do we find out how Black women mediate the academic terrain in order to achieve when we cannot ask them the "usual" research questions because the "usual" elements are not present?

Our lives in the shared history of South Africa centred on how particular events played out in individual lives. I gained so much more insight through adding the richness of others' lived experiences. These stories, which are interesting within themselves, have added dimensions to my research through the analysis. What happened is what Hacking (1995,

cited in Bochner, 2007:73) describes as the difference between gathering "knowledge *from* the past" and critical analysis which allows one to access "knowledge *about* the past" (emphasis added).

There are ideals of perfection which are impossible to achieve. We can never be rid of racism. An ideal institution is not one which is perfect. It is one where we i) realise that we have a shared painful past, ii) share a state of mind desiring ongoing evolution towards something better, iii) offer honesty and iv) acknowledge that some will lose their status but v) want a future academia where equity and equality are the goals. Covid-19 has taught us that nothing is certain and that we are able to recreate our imagined future. If we all can accept that this is our collective time to exit the Apartheid era mentality and our chance to grow towards a co-created opportunities.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Informed consent

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jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Black women's experience of teaching and learning in Higher Education: The role of structure, culture and agency

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by *Jean Farmer*, from *the Centre for Teaching and Learning at Stellenbosch University*. The results of this research will contribute a PhD thesis. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a teaching academic at a Higher Education institution in the Western Cape.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study aims to establish the experiences of individuals in higher education with particular reference to their teaching experience. The study is designed to establish the influence of past and current experiences in the participants' current work context.

2. PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

i. Complete an electronic questionnaire which will take approximately 15 minutes
ii. Partake in a first voice-recorded interview of approximately 45 minutes which would entail a basic drawing and semi-structured conversation at your institution
iii. Partake in a second voice-recorded interview of approximately 45 minutes which would entail a basic drawing and semi-structured conversation at your institution

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are low foreseeable risks or discomforts. An inconvenience of emotional distress and time may be possible and I rely on the generosity of the individuals to offer up their consideration andtime. The participant may at any time terminate involvement in the study.

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

There are no obvious benefits for the subjects.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

No payment will be received for participation.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of anonymity and safe-keeping of data in a personalized pass-word protected file to which only the researcher has access. Each interview willbe coded in a manner that no identification of institution and individual interview will be recognizable. Identities of participants will only be known to the researcher. Only codes will be used for any publication of the data. Individual participants will have the opportunity to review analysed data of their interviews.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you maywithdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdrawyou from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Professor Brenda Leibowitz bleibowitz@sun.ac.za (021 808 3717) or Professor Ronelle Carolissen rlc2@sun.ac.za (021 808 2306)

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

The information above was described to [*me/the participant]* by [*name of relevant person]* in [*Afrikaans/English]* and [*I am the participant is]* in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to [*me/him/her*]. [*I/the participant]* was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to *[my/his/her]* satisfaction.
[I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study] I have been given a copy of this form.

_____

Name of Participant

_____

Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)

_____ _____

Signature of Participant or Legal Representative **Date**

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to_____[*nameof participant]* and/or [his/her] representative_____[*name of the representative]. [H*e/she] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was con ducted in [*Afrikaans/*English*] and [*no translator was used/this conversation was translated into*_____by__].

_____ _____

Signature of Investigator **Date**

Appendix B: Invitational email

Dear Fellow academic

I wish to invite you to partake in my PhD qualitative research on *Experiences of teaching in higher education.* The ultimate aim of my research is to enhance the teaching and learning experience of academics in South Africa. I am funded by the NRF and my research forms part of a broader national study on teaching and learning in higher education. My research takes place at three higher education institutions in the Western Cape and anonymity and confidentiality is assured.

Please see attached:

1. Informed consent form which gives the title and outline of my research as well as some explanation as to the type of questions which may be asked.
2. A short questionnaire which I would like you to complete and return to me should you decide to form part of my research.

I am willing to travel to you/your institution for the two one-hour interview sessions.

Could you kindly respond directly to me by 10 September 2013 with your contact details. See my details below.

Kind regards

Jean Lee Farmer

jeanlee@sun.ac.za

Stellenbosch University

Appendix C: Request for participant details attached to invitational email

Questions prior to interviews (kindly include this with your acceptance of the invitational email to partake in my research)

All responses will remain confidential. Any coding will remain anonymous of person and institution.

Biographical details

1. Please indicate year of birth

2. Please indicate race (this is directly relevant to the particular study)
   - Black African
   - Indian
   - Coloured
   - Other (please specify)

3. Please indicate professional qualifications
   - Honours
   - Masters
   - PhD

4. Please indicate teaching qualifications
   - HED
   - ACE
   - PGCE
   - PGDip
   - BEd
   - MEd
   - MPhil in HE
   - DEd/PhD
   - I am currently pursuing a teaching qualification
   - None
   - Other:

5. Are you currently pursuing a higher degree or a diploma? If "Yes", please provide details

No	Yes	

6. Please indicate the level of your position at your institution
   - Junior lecturer
   - Lecturer
   - Senior lecturer

- Associate professor
- Professor

7. Please indicate your discipline
   - Economic and Management Sciences
   - Education
   - Engineering
   - Health Sciences
   - Humanities
   - Law
   - Mathematical Sciences
   - Military Sciences
   - Physical Sciences
   - Natural Sciences
   - Social Sciences
   - Theology
   - Other:

8. At which institution/s did you obtain your degree/s or qualification/s?

Teaching experience

9. How many years have you been teaching in HE?

10. How many years have you been teaching at your current institution?

11. **What area/s of teaching you are involved in?**
    - **Under graduate**
    - **Post graduate coursework**
    - Research supervision
    - Other:

Professional learning

12. In which areas of your academic career have you attended professional learning opportunities at your current institution?
    - Teaching
    - Research
    - Community Interaction
    - Management
    - Administration
    - None
    - Other:

13. In which areas of your academic career have you attended professional learning opportunities outside your institution?
    - Teaching
    - Research
    - Community Interaction
    - Management
    - Administration
    - None
    - Other:

14. How often do you attend or participate in professional learning opportunities for your teaching?
    - Once a term or more
    - Once a semester
    - Once a year or less
    - Never
    - Other:

15. Where do you go for help / support / advice on your teaching?
    - Teaching and Learning Centre/Division
    - Colleagues
    - Mentor
    - Supervisor
    - Head of Department
    - Conferences
    - Internet
    - Library
    - Teaching Dean
    - Dean
    - Specialist in the field of Higher Education
    - I do not feel the need for help
    - Other:

Appendix D: Ethics approval

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Approval Notice

New Application

26-Jun-2013
Farmer, Jean JL

Proposal #: DESC_Farmer2013

Title: **Black women academics experiences of teaching and learning in four Western Cape higher education institutions**

Dear Mrs. Jean Farmer,

Your DESC approved **New Application** received on **03-Jun-2013**, was reviewed by members of the **Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)** via Expedited review procedures on **26-Jun-2013** and was approved.

Please note the following information about your approved research proposal:

Proposal Approval Period: **26-Jun-2013 -25-Jun-2014**

Please take note of the general Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after complying fully with these guidelines.

Please remember to use your **proposal number** (**DESC_Farmer2013**) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your research proposal.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

Also note that a progress report should be submitted to the Committee before the approval period has expired if a continuation is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary).

This committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research, established by the Declaration of Helsinki and the Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes 2004 (Department of Health). Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.

National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) registration number

REC-050411-032. We wish you the best as you conduct your research.

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at 0218839027.

Included Documents:

DESC form
Informed
consent
Research
proposal
Interview
schedule

Sincerely,

Susara
Oberholzer
REC
Coordinator
Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)

Investigator

Responsibilities

Protection of Human Research Participants

Some of the general responsibilities investigators have when conducting research involving human participants are listed below:

1. Conducting the Research. You are responsible for making sure that the research is conducted according to the REC approved research protocol. You are also responsible for the actions of all your co-investigators and research staff involved with this research. You must also ensure that the research is conducted within the standards of your field of research.

2. Participant Enrollment. You may not recruit or enroll participants prior to the REC approval date or after the expiration date of REC approval. All recruitment materials for any form of media must be approved by the REC prior to their use. If you need to recruit more participants than was noted in your REC approval letter, you must submit an amendment requesting an increase in the number of participants.

3. Informed Consent. You are responsible for obtaining and documenting effective informed consent using only the REC-approved consent documents, and for ensuring that no human participants are involved in research prior to obtaining their informed consent. Please give all participants copies of the signed informed consent documents. Keep the originals in your secured research files for at least five (5) years.

4. Continuing Review. The REC must review and approve all REC-approved research proposals at intervals appropriate to the degree of risk but not less than once per year. There is no grace period. Prior to the date on which the REC approval of the research expires, it is your responsibility to submit the continuing review report in a timely fashion to ensure a lapse in REC approval does not occur. If REC approval of your research lapses, you must stop new participant enrollment, and contact the REC office immediately.

5. Amendments and Changes. If you wish to amend or change any aspect of your research (such as research design, interventions or procedures, number of participants, participant population, informed consent document, instruments, surveys or recruiting material), you must submit the amendment to the REC for review using the current Amendment Form. You may not initiate any amendments or changes to your research without first obtaining written REC review and approval. The only exception is when it is necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants and the REC should be immediately informed of this necessity.

6. Adverse or Unanticipated Events. Any serious adverse events, participant complaints, and all unanticipated problems that involve risks to participants or others, as well as any research related injuries, occurring at this institution or at other performance sites must be reported to Malene Fouch within five (5) days of discovery of the incident. You must also report any instances of serious or continuing problems, or non-compliance with the RECs requirements for protecting human research participants. The only exception to this policy is that the death of a research participant must be

reported in accordance with the Stellenbosch Universtiy Research Ethics Committee Standard Operating Procedures. All reportable events should be submitted to the REC using the Serious Adverse Event Report Form.

7. Research Record Keeping. You must keep the following research related records, at a minimum, in a secure location for a minimum of five years: the REC approved research proposal and all amendments; all informed consent documents; recruiting materials; continuing review reports; adverse or unanticipated events; and all correspondence from the REC

8. Provision of Counselling or emergency support. When a dedicated counsellor or psychologist provides support to a participant without prior REC review and approval, to the extent permitted by law, such activities will not be recognised as research nor the data used in support of research. Such cases should be indicated in the progress report or final report.

9. Final reports. When you have completed (no further participant enrollment, interactions, interventions or data analysis) or stopped work on your research, you must submit a Final Report to the REC.

10. On-Site Evaluations, Inspections, or Audits. If you are notified that your research will be reviewed or audited by the sponsor or any other external agency or any internal group, you must inform the REC immediately of the impending audit/evaluation.

Appendix E: Institution and participant information table

Institutions where participants studied and currently work	Name	Location	Focus	Student population
HAU	DDD	Urban	Research	Elite schools
HAU	FFF	Urban	Research	Elite schools
HDU	AAA	Urban	Teaching and Research	Disadvantaged schools
HDU	BBB	Rural	Teaching	Disadvantaged schools
HDU	GGG	Urban	Teaching	Disadvantaged schools

- HAU – Historically Advantaged (White) University – medium of instruction is Afrikaans or English & Afrikaans
- HDI – Historically Disadvantaged (Black) University – medium of instruction is English

Participant data		Black women academics			
Name	Current institution of employment	Past institution studied at	Background Working class or Middle class	1st lang English Afrikaans isiXhosa	Protective home environment i.e. care-giver present after school
Jean	**HAU – DDD**	**HDU – GGG**	**W**	**E**	**No**
Bonnie	**HAU – DDD**	**HDU – BBB**	**W**	**isiX / E**	**Yes**
Naz	**HAU – FFF**	**HDU – AAA**	**M**	**E**	**Yes**
Caro	**HDU – GGG**	**HAU – FFF**	**M**	**E**	**Yes**
Rina	**HAU – FFF**	**HAU – FFF**	**M**	**E**	**Yes**
Sindy	**HDU – GGG**	**HDU – GGG**	**M**	**E**	**Yes**